



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

Clive Betts MP  
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Committee  
House of Commons

**Lord Harrington**  
*Minister for Refugees*

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Dear Clive,

Thank you for your letter of 22 March. I am writing with responses to the questions you have raised ahead of the evidence session on the 30 March.

**1) We have heard from local authorities that they are expecting further guidance and support from central government. This is after the first refugees have now arrived in the UK. Can you clarify what further support will be given to local authorities? Can you also describe how central government is coordinating the messaging to and consistent implementation of the scheme by local authorities? Are the Government going to set up a central point of contact for Local Authorities?**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has undertaken a range of engagements with local government, including three Ministerial roundtables attended by local government representatives, official led working group meetings, Chief Executive briefing and ongoing bilateral engagement with local authority Chief Executives and senior representatives. The Secretary of State wrote on 14 March to all Leaders and Chief executives about the new scheme. Lord Harrington hosted a webinar on the new scheme for council leaders, chief executives, political group leaders, mayors and local resilience forum (LRF) chairs in England on the 16 March.

Guidance for local authorities was published on 18 March . It is available online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils>. We propose to update this guidance regularly as the situation evolves and our learning develops, and to work with councils and other service providers to develop more detailed guidance and other products.

Local authorities will be able to log any IT issues through the Digital Foundry Platform and we are working to enhance this support desk to introduce a process for Local Authorities to escalate any issues or policy queries. The team are working as quickly as possible to make this service available.

Councils have already helped us to identify areas which require additional detail or clarity; we have taken on board their feedback about the process for making sure that guests are being placed into safe and suitable accommodation, and on making sure the process remains workable for councils. Building on these and other interactions, our future guidance will likely cover outstanding detail on the role of councils in most aspects of this phase, including more detail on the following:

#### Checks

- Pre-arrival and post-arrival checks
- Accommodation checks
- Address validation checks
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

#### Support

- Safeguarding
- Process for accessing public services
- Providing local council tax support
- Post 16 education, employment and training

#### Administration of funds

- Initial cash allowance for guest
- Operation of 'thank you' payment system
- Tier of local government that receives the £10,500 funding.

#### Fallback accommodation

- Re-matching role
- Move-on accommodation

#### Data

- Process for receiving data about new arrivals
- Management information submission requirements

We will continue to work with councils to address other emerging areas which may benefit from enhanced guidance and will release guidance over the following weeks.

DLUHC has met regularly with Local Government during the development of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and will continue to do so during implementation and delivery. We have facilitated roundtables between the Secretary of State and Junior Ministers with political leaders, alongside colleagues from faith groups, housing associations, business sector representatives. We offered a detailed briefing session at an LGA-led webinar and are working closely with the LGA and several key organisations on the co-design and road-testing of the scheme as it develops quickly. We are also using our regular Regional Chief Executive group to discuss the development of the scheme as well as the regular one-to-one conversations our LG Regional Leads have with council Chief Executives.

## **2) Are the Government going to set up a central point of contact for MPs? Will an MP hotline be established? Will MPs receive a letter or other written information on how they can advise their constituents and local authorities?**

I spoke to MPs and a Dear Colleagues letter was sent to MPs on 21 March. DLUHC officials are now attending a daily surgery at Portcullis House alongside the Home Office to answer MPs questions. I am holding a weekly meeting with all MPs and will be doing this throughout recess. MPs are also welcome to contact my office with further issues.

**3) The payment of £10,500 per person to councils is guaranteed for one year only. What steps will be taken to adjust the underlying funding of councils for 2022-23 and beyond to reflect the additional demands on budgets beyond the initial costs of additional provision?**

We will keep funding under close review. Until beneficiaries arrive in larger numbers, we will not fully understand the demand for public services and any additional demands. The department will continue to work closely with local government, the wider public sector and other government departments to ensure that local authorities are able to respond to emerging challenges, including the war in Ukraine. Alongside monitoring local authority finances, the department will continue to engage regularly with local authorities and other government departments to understand and assess policy outcomes.

**4) How will the £350 per household payment made under the 'Homes for Ukraine' policy be made and at what point of each month will it be paid?**

Sponsors will be eligible for an optional 'thank you payment' of £350 per month, as long as the sponsorship arrangement exists, for up to 12 months in total. There will be a maximum of one monthly payment per address paid in arrears, regardless of the number of guests being hosted, and regardless of size or location of the property. We will be asking councils to administer these payments as they will be best placed to understand the sponsor arrangements in their areas. It will be for councils to determine payment arrangements, including the date that payments are made.

Payments must not be released to sponsors until property checks have been completed. Further guidance on property checks will follow in due course. We will allocate funding for these payments, but we expect councils to cover administration costs from the tariff including costs of fraud prevention. This payment will be tax free and should not affect the sponsor's entitlement to benefits or council tax status. We will continue to work closely with councils on the delivery of these payments.

**5) Can the Committee be sent the Department's analysis of the ways in which households that accept Ukrainian families and individuals will be guaranteed that rules and regulations potentially leading to unintended consequences for benefit payments, mortgages, insurance, leasehold restrictions and so on are to be dealt with?**

Insurers have agreed that for homeowners accommodating Ukrainian Nationals in their home, there is no need to contact your insurer on the basis that they are accommodated as non-paying guests (please refer to the Association of British Insurers' statement for more details). In other situations, including where the sponsor is a landlord or a tenant, they will need to contact their insurer.

Lenders have committed to enable as many borrowers as possible to participate in the scheme. For sponsors who have a mortgage on their property they will need to contact their mortgage lender. We are working with the mortgage lender sector to standardise and simplify this process as far as possible.

As we have set out in guidance and FAQs to date, the Government is ensuring 'thank you' payments will remain tax-free and will not affect benefits or council tax.

Measures will shortly be put in place to ensure that households taking part in the Homes for Ukraine scheme maintain their council tax position. The sponsored person (or people) will be disregarded for council tax thereby protecting any single person discount, the monthly 'thank you' payment will not impact on a host's local council tax support claim, and any host's house which is exempt from council tax will remain so.

Where the sponsored person is living in the host's second or empty home it is open to the sponsor to pay the council tax bill and the Department will provide a model tenancy agreement for hosts providing for this option. However, where the sponsored person is liable to pay the council tax bill, the disregard will mean it is reduced by 50%. In cases of financial hardship, local council tax support will be available to Ukrainian arrivals

In some cases, sponsors will need to check with their landlord, freeholder or mortgage provider, and insurance company, about whether they've got any policies which need to be factored in. Those considering applying to be a sponsor should refer to their mortgage lender's and insurer's websites where further advice will be available as soon as possible.

## **6) Where Ukrainian refugees are housed in a separate housing unit (e.g., a self-contained flat) will normal tenancy rules apply or not?**

No rent is charged under the Sponsorship Scheme, so there will be no creation of tenancy rights. Ukrainian nationals will either be excluded licensees, if sharing accommodation with the sponsor, or excluded occupier tenants in self-contained accommodation under the Protection for Eviction Act 1977. Excluded occupiers can be evicted without a court order. The sponsorship arrangement is not intended to confer exclusive possession to the Ukrainian guest or create the relationship of landlord and tenant between the parties. More information can be found in the FAQs published online.

## **7) What guidance will be given to councils about Disclosure and Barring Service checks, safeguarding and other care issues in relation to Ukrainians being housed in private homes? How long will councils have to complete such checks?**

Before a visa is issued the Home Office conduct checks on both the Ukrainian applicant and sponsor (including on all adults 18+ in a sponsor's household) these include Police National Computer (PNC) and Warnings Index checks.

Councils have a statutory duty to promote the welfare of adults and children at risk. The sponsor guidance makes clear that prospective sponsors will be subject to accommodation and safeguarding checks. We will be updating this guidance in the coming days.

The guidance makes clear that accommodation and DBS checks should be conducted at the earliest opportunity. Councils should use best endeavours to conduct the checks before the arrival of the guest(s), recognising that this will not be possible in all circumstances.

We have asked Councils to confirm that they have checked that the accommodation exists, and safeguarding checks have been completed as part of their data return to the department.

Part of the decision regarding suitability of the sponsor will be informed by the relevant DBS check. In terms of eligibility, within the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme, the expectation is that:

### ***Checks on sponsors***

- If a match is made which involves a guest who is a child (i.e., under 18), an enhanced DBS check will be undertaken on all members of the sponsor household who are aged 16+. This includes a check of the children's barred list. However, this does not apply if the child guest is related to the host sponsor, in this instance only a basic DBS check is required.
- If the council decides that an adult guest requires additional support, due to age, illness or disability **and** it is proposed that an adult (16+) member of the sponsoring household provides them with this support, then the local authority may ask for an Enhanced DBS check (including a check of the adults' barred list) to be undertaken on any members of the sponsor's household who is proposed to provide that support. Existing guidance regarding [Regulated Activity with Adults](#) can support the council's assessment of the eligibility of individuals for this level of check.
- In all other cases, including where there is a family relationship between the sponsor and the guest(s), a basic check should be undertaken on all members of the sponsor household who are aged 16+.

### **8) What steps are being taken to arrange data sharing access between agencies in respect of both refugees and hosts?**

The data transfer steps in the first instance are as follows:

- The sponsor and beneficiary's data are submitted to the Home Office via the visa application process.
- This data (including the address of the sponsor) is then passed to DLUHC and allocated to the relevant council / DA where they can be seen and downloaded in the Foundry service
- The visa application will then be processed by the Home Office and after both sponsor and beneficiary have passed the Home Office checks (including initial Police National Computer (PNC) criminal records and Warnings Index checks on all adults in the sponsor's household), the Home Office will issue the beneficiary with a visa.
- The Local Authority or Devolved Administration use the Foundry service to record their checks, such as whether the sponsor and beneficiary have met up, whether the accommodation is suitable and whether safeguarded checks have been completed.

### **9) What arrangements have the Department made to match refugees with potential hosts**

So far over 25,000 applications for Homes for Ukraine have been submitted. These applications show that sponsors and potential beneficiaries have already found each other in large numbers. A number of charities and non-government organisations are working to offer services to match potential sponsors and Ukrainian households seeking to come to the UK. The Government is engaging intensively with the sector on this. We are actively exploring ways in which we can build connections between sponsors and Ukrainians that do not yet know each other. One method is a digital matching tool and team of caseworkers which an NGO called Reset are testing as a funded pilot over the next two weeks. If successful, this could be scaled up.

**10) What particular steps are to be taken to handle unaccompanied children arriving from Ukraine?**

Ukraine's Government has expressed a general preference that Ukrainian children should remain in the vicinity and should not be placed with foreign families. This matter falls under the remit of the Home Office.

We recognise the deeply troubling circumstances faced by all Ukrainians who are caught up in this conflict, including unaccompanied children, and the role that many countries will need to play to safeguard those children. It will generally be in the best interests of a child to reunite with their family members in the first instance.

We know that neighbouring countries and international NGO's are working hard to ensure that appropriate processes are put in place to process and safeguard unaccompanied children who are fleeing Ukraine. We have held a number of discussions with leading international organisations and are continuing to monitor the situation. We have reached out to the UKR Government to determine how the UK can help.

The policy changes the UK government have already introduced will enable many children to come here and be reunited with extended family members who are in the UK. The routes and visa changes which we have announced so far follow extensive engagement with the Ukrainian Government to ensure they respond directly to their needs and asks. We will continue to work closely with them going forwards.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme is not open to unaccompanied children.

**11) Are steps being taken to speed up the processing of payments for Universal Credit and other benefits where newly arrived families qualify?**

To ensure guests have funds the council, where the sponsor accommodation is located, should provide an interim payment (in line with other resettlement schemes) of £200 per guest for subsistence costs. The £200 payment is factored into the tariff councils will receive and does not need to be repaid by the guest. Councils will also have discretion within the tariff to top-up or further support guests with interim or additional payments. As those arriving will most likely not have immediate access to a bank account, it is recommended that this payment is made in cash. This is expected to provide sufficient funding until Universal Credit payments are made.

DWP can provide an advance on Universal Credit once the claim has been processed, usually in five days of the claim being made.

**12) Where costs for an individual are significantly in excess of £10,500 in 2021-22 (e.g., for a child who qualifies for special educational needs support or where nursery costs are high) will councils be able to bid for discretionary extra support?**

We expect councils to use the tariff to meet all their associated costs (both for providing council services and for administering payments). We recognise, however, that a small number of councils may incur additional essential costs above and beyond what could reasonably be regarded as normal expenditure and not available through other mainstream funding mechanisms. We will consider claims for such costs on an exceptional basis.

**13) Where families and individuals housed under the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme feel it is no longer appropriate for them to live at their original UK home how will they be guided to another one?**

If for any reason there is a need to end the sponsorship arrangement early, the local council should be informed as soon as possible. The local council will then step in to help beneficiaries find different accommodation. We are working with a range of charities, community, and faith organisations to consider and help support their role in this programme. We will be providing further guidance in due course.

People who arrive in the UK through this scheme will be able to access all benefits, including housing benefit where there are housing costs.

**14) Does the Department have an analysis of the location of spare school places and how this is likely to match up with the location of Ukrainian families settling?**

The Department for Education has a good understanding of the location of spare capacity school places. They have reviewed this against the current Ukrainian diaspora in England.

The Ukraine Family Scheme relies on a named family member in the UK offering a home in a location that cannot be influenced by the Department.

The first phase of the Homes for Ukraine scheme is based upon sponsors coming forward with a named individual that they wish to support in their home, which also cannot be influenced by the Department.

The Department of Education does not yet have sufficient data to make a meaningful projection as to how the needs of Ukrainian families may impact the availability of spare school places in any specific area.

Local authorities are being informed as applications under Homes for Ukraine are submitted. We therefore anticipate local authorities becoming aware of, and able to elevate, such concerns should they arise.

**15) Will local authorities be provided with access to capital finance where extra facilities are necessary? For example, where temporary additional classroom are required?**

Local authorities will receive a tariff of £10,500 per beneficiary. Further funding for education will be paid at a rate of £3,000 per 0-4 year old, £6,580 per 5-11 year old, and £8,755 per 11-18 year old.

The Department for Education provide local authorities with capital funding through the annual Basic Need grant to support them to provide school places and are monitoring the situation closely. The Pupil Place Planning Advisor team engages with local authorities on a regular basis to review plans for creating additional places and to consider alternatives where necessary.

**16) Will councils be given additional funds to help accommodate households which become overcrowded as the result of their having accepted 'Homes for Ukraine' families?**

Published guidance states that sponsors need to be able to offer at least an empty room, to ensure the safety and privacy of guests, and that a bed in a shared space would not be an appropriate offer of accommodation for six months. It also states that sponsors should consider how many people they can accommodate to allow for sufficient space, outlining that two people should not be in one room unless they are: adult cohabiting partners; a parent and child; two siblings of the same gender if aged over 10; two siblings regardless of gender if aged under 10. This information is all available online.

The 'thank you' payment is limited to one payment per residential address each month, irrelevant of how many beneficiaries are being housed at an address, to reduce the likelihood of a sponsor trying to fit more beneficiaries into accommodation than there is room for.

There may be some cases where the sponsor/beneficiary relationship breaks down and the beneficiary is homeless or at risk of homelessness. If for any reason the sponsorship arrangement ends early, the local council will then step in to help guests to find alternative accommodation. Councils' statutory homelessness duties will apply in this instance. DLUHC will provide further advice on this in due course.

**17) How many Afghan refugees are still housed in hotels and other temporary accommodation?**

There are currently 12,391 individuals accommodated in bridging hotels nationally. \*

\* Source Home Office data dated 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**18) What technical equipment (e.g., phones, laptops) can be provided to refugees and how will it be provided? This was found to be an urgent need for Afghan refugees when they arrived in the UK.**

At the local authority-led Welcome Points established at 12 locations in England (and nine further locations in Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland, with 'on call' capability available at a further five Ports of arrival in England, should the need arise) there will be mobiles and SIM cards for those that need them. The experience to date is that the need for this has been very limited, though recognising it is very early days.

This is a full list of Welcome Points: Stansted Airport, Luton Airport, Heathrow Airport, St Pancras International Rail, Manchester Airport, Birmingham Airport, Gatwick Airport, Dover Port and Folkstone (Eurotunnel), Bristol Airport, Liverpool Airport, Birkenhead Ferry Port, East Midlands Airport, Leeds Bradford Airport, Doncaster (Robin Hood) Airport, Portsmouth International Port, London Victoria Rail and Coach Station, Southampton Airport, Plymouth Port, Bournemouth Airport and Port of Poole, Harwich International Port, Port of Hull, Humberside Airport, Newcastle Airport, Port of Tyne, Port of Newhaven, Teesside International Airport, Southend Airport, London City Airport, Weymouth Port, Cornwall Airport Newquay.

**19) What discussions have taken place with banks to provide for the fast tracking of bank account applications for arriving refugees?**

To open a bank account in the UK, guests will usually need to show proof of ID such as a passport, a biometric residency permit, a driver's licence, or a recognised identity card. Some UK banks ask for proof of address, although this is not required by law to open a bank account. We recognise that this is a big issue, and we are working with the sector to encourage them to relax this requirement.

With my very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

**Lord Harrington  
Minister for Refugees**