

**Report for: Cabinet**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
<b>Subject:</b>	Homes for Ukraine Scheme
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes - by virtue of level of revenue spend over £500,000
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Charlie Stewart - Corporate Director Resources
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Jean Lammiman - Portfolio Holder for Communities and Culture
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	Yes
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Equalities Impact Assessment

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out The Council's approach to delivering the Government's Homes for Ukraine Programme

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Authorise the Director of Strategy and Partnerships, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder of Communities & Culture, to spend the expected grant received from the Government to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which is expected to be in the region of £2.1m in 2022/23;
2. Approve the outcomes and principles for the programme, which will guide the expenditure decisions;
3. Note the contracts with The Romanian and Eastern European Hub, Two Generations, Voluntary Action Harrow, Citizens Advice and Harrow Law Centre to deliver certain aspects of the programme.

**Reason (for the recommendations):** To ensure that the Council is able to carry out its role in running checks and assessments on hosts and guests as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

Following the invasion of Ukraine, the Government launched the Homes for Ukraine scheme in March 2022. This report sets out the Council's approach to meeting our responsibilities under this programme, namely; running background checks on sponsors and the accommodation they offer to ensure that placements are safe and suitable and to help the newly arrived Ukrainian citizens adapt to life in the UK and their new home.

### **Options considered**

#### **1. To redeploy existing staff to deliver the programme**

This option was rejected as organisational capacity is already stretched with the need to progress with other organisational priorities.

#### **2. To recruit additional capacity to support the running of the programme in house**

Recruiting additional resource to be able to run the programme in-house would take significant time to be able to run a recruitment and appointment process. As refugees were arriving within a matter of weeks we needed to be able to resource and scale up the programme urgently.

This option was partially rejected for the running of the programme, but we have used the resources made available through the programme to bring in additional capacity in the Policy Team, Children's safeguarding, housing and Revenues and Benefits teams to be able to support the increased workloads as a result of the programme.

### **3. To partner with local organisations in the delivery of the programme**

Harrow is fortunate to have Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations that have specialist skills and knowledge with the ability to start work immediately. Working with partners therefore brings much needed capacity and skills (such as Ukrainian and Russian speakers, expertise in home-share and matching) and ensures our service is culturally appropriate and provides good value for money. It was therefore decided we would take an approach that partners with local organisations.

## **Background**

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, offering a route to the UK for Ukrainian refugees who wanted to leave the Ukraine.

This scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and also to their immediate family members to be sponsored to come to the UK. The number of people who can access this scheme is uncapped and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward.

Ukrainians can also enter the UK via the Family Visa route – there is no funding attached for services as a result of Ukrainians arriving via this route.

When a sponsor and refugee has put in a visa application, local authorities are informed about the match via the Government's Foundry data management page for the programme, which all local authorities are given access to.

Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to 3 years under the visa scheme set up through the Homes for Ukraine Programme, which will allow them to access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support. Those arriving need to meet standard security checks prior to being issued with a visa. Sponsors and all adults in sponsors' households will also be subject to

initial Police National Computer (PNC), criminal records and Warnings Index checks by the Home Office. Guests arriving from Ireland should only travel to the UK once they have a visa.

Under this scheme, sponsors in the UK are expected to host Ukrainian individuals or families for a minimum of six months. The scheme is funded with local authorities receiving a total of £10,500 per Ukrainian arrival.

The local council is responsible for initial checks, including at least one in person visit, payments to sponsors (of £350 per household per month for the six-month period), ongoing support, school places, and information about the local area. Following the guest(s)' arrival, councils should confirm as soon as possible that the guest is well and that there are no welfare concerns or needs for care and support. Where there are concerns for the safety or welfare of a child, the Council will follow its usual processes in line with [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) which may include further assessments. The scheme is not meant for unaccompanied children as it stands; however, the Government is currently considering options for how Ukrainian minors who are not travelling with or joining their parent or legal guardian could be supported to travel to the UK. Where it is suspected that an adult may have care and support needs, a needs assessment will be undertaken in line with the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

The role of the Council is as follows:

1. Initial checks
  - Safeguarding checks carried out by the Multi-Agency-Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
  - Council Tax checks on address to check it exists
2. Assessments
  - Combined Host Family Assessment (practicalities, safeguarding) and Home Assessment (suitability, safety)
  - These are virtual (zoom, WhatsApp video) carried out by local social enterprise 2Generations and can be in person if Sponsor Households don't have the technology
  - DBS checks
3. Home Visits
  - The above assessments risk-assess the homes and flag any concerns that require a home visit by Council officers (safeguarding or housing)
  - The assessments also help the Romanian and Eastern European Hub (RO-EE) prioritise home visits for the initial Welfare Assessment of Ukrainian arrivals
4. Payments
  - e-registration form for Thank You payment processed by the Revs and Bens team
5. Welcome Support
  - In person visit by the Romanian and Eastern European Hub (Ro-EE hub)

- Ongoing support to access public services, for cultural and social integration, translation and interpretation will be offered by Ro-EE in partnership with Citizens Advice Harrow and the Harrow Law Centre
- Ro-EE to issue £200 subsistence payment
- On-going support and contact

## 6. Communications

- Introductory letter to sponsors and Ukrainian guests, webpages, Sponsors forum

## 7. Post Six-month arrangements

- Extending arrangements
- Re-matching
- Move to independence or return home

Table 1: summary of roles and responsibilities

	Council	Two Generations	Ro-EE Hub	VAH
Host Family Assessment: Speak with the residents in the home to ensure that everyone is supportive of the sponsor arrangements		X		
Home Assessment: Check the accommodation is suitable to support the number of refugees allocated		X		
Complete the necessary DBS checks				X
Arrange for the monthly £350 payment to the sponsor household for an initial period up to 12 months	X			
Welfare Needs assessment of refugees (are children with a parent or close family relative, health, medical, disability needs)			X	
Facilitate the registration at health centres, early years settings, schools and colleges as appropriate			X	
Make an initial payment of £200 to each refugee	X		X	
Support the refugees to access benefits, training and/ or employment			X in partnership with CAB and Law Centre	

	Council	Two Generations	Ro-EE Hub	VAH
Support the refugees to integrate into the local community			X	
Refer to specialist services as necessary			X	
Provide the date of the initial check to the government through the completion of the Homes for Ukraine database	X			
Provide support with any alternative accommodation should the home sponsor arrangements breakdown - See separate re-matching process	X	X	X	

### Homes for Ukraine Programme Outcomes

The Council has developed the following outcomes for our local approach to the Homes for Ukraine Programme:

1. Stability of placement
  - Relationship with sponsor, avoiding homelessness, avoiding sponsorship breakdown and further upheaval, ability to arrange alternatives quickly if things do breakdown.
2. Feel settled in the borough
  - Source of income, immigration status, social and cultural integration, access to food, employment, education, skills and other local services
3. Support to manage health and well-being
  - Ability to process emotional impact of trauma, and psychological impact, safe spaces to go and/or talk, access to counselling, talking therapies, therapeutic activities, social and cultural opportunities, access to health and social care services if needed
4. Transition to independence or safe return home
  - Depending on aspirations of individuals after 6 months, look to secure accommodation, employment options, language skills, as well plan for further options at the end of the three-year visa

The above outcomes would be delivered using the following principles:

- Work with partners to understand the needs of the Ukrainian community,
- Actions and interventions would be evidence and insight based, and
- Equity and consistency with other refugee schemes.

## Resources and Costs

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, the Council's Corporate Strategic Board approved the proposal to work with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to deliver the programme including the Romanian and Eastern European Hub (Ro-EE), Two Generations, Voluntary Action Harrow, Citizens Advice and Harrow Law Centre to deliver the refugee welcome service and wrap around support for this group. Crucially, these organisations will bring in specialised knowledge, language ability, and capacity from the voluntary sector to deliver support to Ukrainian refugees that doesn't currently exist within the council. It was also agreed that funding from the government based on the calculation of £10,500 per Ukrainian refugee with an initial planning assumption of 80 refugees linked to 46 sponsors would be used to fund the range of work needed for this programme. These planning assumptions amounted to a total expected government grant from the scheme of £840,000.

Since then, the numbers have increased substantially with 134 refugees already in the borough as of 5<sup>th</sup> July. This means the currently available funding for the programme is already at £1,407,000. Our new planning assumption based on the number of sponsor and refugee applications already in the system is that we will receive circa 200 refugees for the programme. This amounts to a total of **£2,100,000 in estimated external government funding for the Homes for Ukraine programme in Harrow.**

<b>Expenditure relating to 2022/23</b>	
	<b>Value</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	
2Generations	£35,000
Ro-EE	£90,000
CAB	£25,000
Law Centre	£25,000
Policy Team staff	£100,000
Housing staffing	£90,000
Childrens social worker	£90,000
Community Grants	£50,000
£200 Subsistence payments	£35,800
Revs & bens Admin	£45,000
Childrens BSS overtime for Allpay	£750
Home improvement expenses	£5,000
DBS	£35,000
<b>Total Tariff</b>	<b>£626,550</b>
<b>Phase 2</b>	
2Generations re-matching	£30,000
Housing	£300,000
Community Grants	£50,000
Nursery fees	TBC

<b>Expenditure relating to 2022/23</b>	
Ro-EE	£107,000
Subsistence top up payment	£36,000
Analyst Capacity	£50,000
Other requirements arising from Ukrainian arrivals needs analysis	TBC
<b>Total Estimated Phase 2 spend</b>	<b>£573,000.00</b>

<b>Estimated Value of Grant for H4U Programme</b>	<b>£2,100,000</b>
Phase 1 commitments	£626,550
Phase 2 estimated commitments	£573,000
<b>Remaining Funding</b>	<b>£900,450</b>

This pot of funding will cover other commitments for the programme including Phase One Council staffing costs, accommodation checks by Two Generations, DBS checks by Voluntary Action Harrow, welfare checks by the Romanian and Eastern European Hub, funding for Citizens Advice Harrow and Harrow Law Centre to support for new arrivals, and the £200 payments to new arrivals.

Phase 2 of the programme includes costs for potential rematching refugees with other sponsors, housing costs for incentivising landlords and accounting for void rent in the private rented sector market, community grants, subsistence top up payments if Universal Credit applications are delayed and analyst capacity. With regards to the housing costs for Phase 2, there is a strong reality that the ability to procure properties at Local Housing Allowance rates will be challenging in the current private rented sector environment. Hence, the proposed spend is an estimation which will be determined by market conditions.

Phase 2 of the programme will also allow for budget to be able to respond to the on-going needs of the refugees.

The council will also be reimbursed on a quarterly basis for the monthly £350 thank you payments we process for the hosts.

The council will also receive an education tariff. The Department for Education (DfE) will allocate funding on a per pupil basis for the 3 phases of education at the following annual rates:

- Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000
- Primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580
- Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755

These tariffs include support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This will be S14 funding for the local authority to determine



how to spend and we will decide this in partnership with schools. Methodology for how this funding will be allocated is still being developed by DfE, but we anticipate the funding being paid in mid-July for both the Ukraine scheme and the two Afghan schemes that the Council is also supporting.

## Performance Issues

The following is data as of 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

Total Refugees who have applied for Visas	Total Refugees that have arrived in the Borough	RO-EE Hub Home Visit completed vs those with visa status 'arrived'	£200 payment card activated following RO-EE Home Visit	All checks passed (households)
251	134	117	112	45
		87%	96%	38%

Row Labels	Refugee visa status	%
Arrived	134	53.4%
Issued	56	22.3%
Confirmed	21	8.4%
Missing		
Application	25	10.0%
Pending	13	5.2%
Refused	2	0.8%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Total Sponsors/households	of which withdrawals confirmed on Foundry system	Sponsor contacted and e-form sent	Address checked against CT
132	6	131	128
		99%	97%

DBS Verification completed and received for all members of household	e-form received	Thank you payment set up following completion of all checks
85	65	42
67%	83%	

## Environmental Implications

Given the relatively small number of refugees arriving there is no expectation of any environmental implications.

## Data Protection Implications

Data sharing agreements are in place with partners to enable the approach set out in this report to work effectively.

All data sharing and processing must comply with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

## Risk Management Implications

Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? **No**

Separate risk register in place? **Yes**

The following key risks should be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
Refugees staying in unsafe and unsuitable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Checks process and weekly liaison across the partnership on specific cases where there is any concern</li> <li>▪ Liaison with Foundry to improve the data we receive</li> </ul>	Amber
Homes for Ukraine accommodation arrangements come to an end because of breakdown or practical reasons putting pressure on the council to provide accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 6 month check in process with hosts and guests (which starts 3 months into an arrangement)</li> <li>▪ Re-matching process in place</li> </ul>	Amber

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pro-actively working to secure alternative accommodation options</li> </ul>	
<p>Suitable accommodation found at the end of the 6 month initial period</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pro-actively working to secure new accommodation options suitable for families at the end of 6 months, including setting out a fund for incentive payments (and potential void costs) for landlords from the allocated govt funding</li> <li>▪ Lobbying of Government to continue sponsor household involvement where this remains to be working well for both sponsor and guest(s)</li> </ul>	Red
<p>Pressure of council services from refugees arriving via other visa routes which do not have funding attached to them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regular monitoring of situation via schools, social care and housing</li> <li>▪ On-going lobbying of Government on behalf of those that came in via the Family Visa route being able to move onto the Homes for Ukraine scheme if their initial family placement breaks down</li> </ul>	Amber
<p>Inability to meet the unique needs of Ukrainian arrivals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ro-EE employing Ukrainian caseworkers and volunteers. This means that cultural know-how and needs are embedded within the organisation</li> </ul>	Green
<p>Demand for the service exceeds capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Policy team is monitoring the number of new potential sponsors and refugees that are appearing on the Home Office matching system. If numbers exceed current estimation, the additional external funds that will be made available to Harrow</li> </ul>	Green

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
	can be used to increase capacity	
Impact of contracting refugee services leading to a slowdown of accessing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Close monitoring of refugee outcomes in the form of monthly reporting that can highlight any areas of lag that can be addressed asap.</li> </ul>	Green
Large number of arrivals around the same time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Harrow has chosen to adopt a model of working with several VCS partners and a network of referrals to lessen the load on each individual organisation. This will ensure that the services are able to cope with a higher load.</li> </ul>	Green
Failure of the programme to achieve outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Close monitoring of refugee outcomes via monthly reporting from partners, particularly the Ro-EE Hub as well as regular work in progress meetings with VCS partners</li> </ul>	Amber
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multiple safeguards including checking Council Tax records of sponsors, verifying properties via background and accommodation checks, in-person visits to the property upon guests' arrival, verifying guest documents in person before activation of pre-paid Allpay cards.</li> </ul>	Green
Overspending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As highlighted above, the programme's budget has a healthy buffer in unallocated funds, given the economy of scale in delivering a programme for a fairly large group of refugees where funding is provided per individual resettled. The planning assumptions put forward</li> </ul>	Amber

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
	are based on conservative numbers of arrivals and do not take into account the arrival of all individuals on the Home Office list as well as newer applicants who continue to be added to the list. Budgets and spending are monitored closely by the programme management team to prevent overspend.	

## Procurement Implications

As an emergency response, the Council entered into a number of contracts with local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations. These are set out below and have all followed the appropriate procurement advice. Given the speed at which the Council needed to respond, all of these procurements have been exempt from competitive tendering with the appropriate waivers obtained. In addition, the Ro-EE is the sole supplier in Harrow who have the specialised cultural knowledge and ability to deliver this specific service at this point, given that the Ukrainian community in the borough is a nascent one with limited VCS presence and this service offers language and cultural awareness which no other service can provide.

Organisation	Role	Funding (£'000s)	Length of contract
The Romanian and East European Hub	Refugee welfare checks and wrap around resettlement support	£197	One year (April 2022- March 2023)
2Generations	Sponsor and accommodation checks; rematching	£65	One year (April 2022- March 2023)
Citizens Advice Harrow	Generalist Information and Advice, including benefits claims	£25	One year (April 2022- March 2023)
Harrow Law Centre	Specialist advice such as immigration	£25	One year (April 2022- March 2023)

Voluntary Action Harrow	DBS checks	£35	One year (April 2022- March 2023)
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## **Legal Implications**

The Homes for Ukraine Programme is a Government scheme, which allows local residents to put their homes forward to support Ukrainian refugees who wish to come to the UK. In signing up as a sponsor, the Council is obliged to put in place such arrangements to assess suitability of the Household and its occupants so as to safeguard the Ukrainian refugees when they arrive in the UK. As such, the Council is following its statutory duties insofar as safeguarding is concerned and the appropriate advice and sign off of suitability of accommodation to meet refugee/guests needs.

The government has issued Guidance for Councils. We have a statutory duty to promote the welfare of adults and children at risk and we have a number of responsibilities under the scheme, including to carry out accommodation checks, DBS checks, and welfare checks.

## **Financial Implications**

The Council expects to receive a total of £2,100,000 in estimated external government funding for the Homes for Ukraine programme in Harrow, and currently has planned or committed expenditure of just under £1.2m, leaving circa £900,000 of unallocated funds. The Council will ensure that any future expenditure for the Programme is delivered within this £900,000 envelope, ensuring no additional monies are required to support the obligations to Ukrainian guests. Therefore, financial monitoring will continue in line with the current budget management and monitoring principles.

## **Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

The Homes for Ukraine scheme and the proposals therein caters to a predefined group of refugees who are arriving in the borough and hence will not result in unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

The scheme will advance equality of opportunity among those of Ukrainian ethnicity and in particular Ukrainian females given the disproportionate impact of the war and displacement on these two groups.

The scheme will foster good relations between people from different groups through the wider integration support offered to Ukrainian arrivals and related workstream planned to help Ukrainian arrivals feel welcome and settled in the borough.

## **Council Priorities**

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme ensures appropriate support is given to sponsor households and their Ukrainian guests. To this aim, all the Council's support and work will be putting Residents First.

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

### **Statutory Officer: Dawn Calvert**

Signed by the Chief Financial Officer

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022**

### **Statutory Officer: Stephen Dorrian**

Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022**

### **Chief Officer: Charlie Stewart**

Signed off by the Corporate Director

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022**

### **Head of Procurement: Nimesh Mehta**

Signed by the Head of Procurement

**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022**

### **Head of Internal Audit: Susan Dixon**

Signed by the Head of Internal Audit

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

## **Mandatory Checks**

**Ward Councillors notified: NO, as it impacts on all Wards**

EqlA carried out: YES

**EqlA cleared by: Shumaila Dar**

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Alex Dewsnap, Director of Strategy and Partnerships,  
[alex.dewsnap@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:alex.dewsnap@harrow.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:** None

**Call-in waived by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**NO**