
Homes for Ukraine – West Berkshire Update

Report being considered by: Health and Wellbeing Board

On: 29 September 2022

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Item for: Discussion



1. Purpose of the Report

This purpose of this report is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the local response to and implementation of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

2. Recommendation(s)

That the Health and Wellbeing Board NOTE the progress made on delivery of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in West Berkshire and the plans to develop the local response.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 On the 24th February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine. It is reported that over 10 million people are now displaced and millions have left Ukraine. In the wake of the emerging humanitarian crisis the government announced two schemes to allow displaced Ukrainians to come to the UK. The first, termed the Family Scheme, allowed those with immediate family in the UK the right to come to join them. Many have arrived under this scheme including a number in West Berkshire. The second scheme was dubbed the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This allowed in the first instance individual and host households to offer to host arrivals from Ukraine as guests. At the time of writing some 224 hosts have been matched with over 560 guests of which just over 420 are currently resident in West Berkshire.
- 3.2 In late March 2022 the Council received notification from the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing that it was to play a key role in the delivery of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This was to include a range of functions such carrying out accommodation and DBS checks, making payments due under the scheme, and school admissions as well as working with statutory and voluntary sector partners on a range of provision and support. The Council also announced at this time that it would be match funding a public appeal organised by Greenham Common Trust along with the Trust.
- 3.3 A three tier structure has been set up to oversee the delivery of the scheme in West Berkshire with a co-ordinating group ('Core Group') consisting the Council and voluntary sector considering broad matters of provision and strategy as well as voluntary sector funding and support. Within the Council there is a cross-cutting delivery group consisting of Public Protection, Education, Adult and Children's Services, Finance, Housing and Public Health amongst others. This group co-ordinates both the response of the various Council services but also receives updates on provision by statutory and voluntary sector partnership. Finally there is the

operational response delivered and / or co-ordinated through the Ukraine Hub which includes the community engagement functions of the response.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 For ease the information in this part of the report has been broken down into three key areas of delivery:

The Council Response

- 4.2 On receipt of the request from DLUHC to take a local lead the Council set up the Ukraine Support Hub built on the model of the Covid Support Hub. Starting with one member of staff the Hub has now grown to a team of four and acts as the front door to the Council for all enquiries apart from School Admissions. In addition the Hub Manager also manages and keeps up to date the data which is so crucial to the effective delivery of the scheme. In addition acting as the front door the Hub working with colleagues from HR have conducted around 320 DBS / Advanced Disclosure checks. They also work with colleagues in transport to arrange short term public transport provision.
- 4.3 The terms of the scheme also requires that accommodation checks are undertaken to assess whether the accommodation is suitable from with respect to space etc. In West Berkshire these checks have been conducted by the Public Protection Service. These checks take a view on whether the accommodation is suitable from both living and safety standards. The outcome of both the accommodation and DBS checks are notified to the Government and this triggers the monthly 'thank you' £350 payments to hosts which are paid monthly from arrival of the guests in arrears.
- 4.4 All guests receive a £200 payment on arrival. These are now paid via pre-paid debit card and our aim is make these payments within 2/3 days of notification of arrival. All guests and hosts payments are organised by the Hub with the support of the Council's finance team.
- 4.5 School admissions has been another major feature of the Council response especially given the profile of the guests includes a large proportion of school aged children. As hosts are notified to the Council we are able to match them against school catchment and where there are school aged children set to arrive or have arrived we can start the process of contacting the local school. Applications are made through the normal admissions system. Assistance is also available to help guests and hosts identify and access early years provision. So far 131 school places have been arranged.
- 4.6 Once guests have arrived this triggers a welfare visits. These checks are conducted by the Education Welfare Service where there are children in the household grouping and by Public Protection where only adults are hosted. Upwards of 200 welfare checks have now been conducted and the second round of visits are underway.

Community Engagement and Community Provision

- 4.7 The Council has developed a number of pages on its website with useful information in relation to the scheme. In addition each guest receives a Welcome to West Berkshire pack that introduces the area and local provision from schools to health and the voluntary sector.

- 4.8 Each week there is a bulletin for hosts that updates on service provision from statutory and voluntary partners and has included issues such as safeguarding, employment, English language provision, school places, primary care provision, transport etc. This is supplemented by specific communications based around an individual topic. An example of this is safeguarding where a specific on-line briefing has been delivered along with a briefing around understanding mental health. Further briefings are planned.
- 4.9 One matter came to the fore very quickly and that was the issue of English language provision. There is now a broad offer available to guests covering all levels from beginners to those seeking a qualification. Conversational English is also available and we are now looking to develop an offer around technical English to assist further with employment prospects.
- 4.10 In order to gauge the level and type of provision required we are in regular discussions with voluntary sector and Greenham Common Trust through the auspices of the Core Group. We also attend other forums where hosts and guests come together and where the feedback and discussions are key to successful local delivery.
- 4.11 The role of the voluntary sector has been crucial to the local scheme including the provision of furniture and other goods to distribution of SIM cards and arranging summer activities as well as making available funds under the Greenham Trust led appeal to support activities such as community groups and mediation. More capacity has now been put in place to unlock further the potential of the voluntary sector.

Health Provision and Response

- 4.12 Many of the main factors (wider determinants) that impact on people's health include things like housing, financial security, safety, employment and education. As discussed above, the Council has been working tirelessly to ensure that the correct support is in place for Ukrainian Families arriving in West Berkshire because these things will impact greatly on their health.
- 4.13 Alongside this, liaison on local health provision has been led from the Council's Public Health Team. In terms of the explanation of local health service related provision the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group have prepared a comprehensive 'Welcome Pack'.
- 4.14 Included in the pack is the advice that all Ukrainian families arriving in West Berkshire should register with a GP practice, as the gateway to wider health services. To aid GPs with understanding potential increase in demand on their services, a GP Data dashboard has been created and is updated weekly and sent to GPs every Friday.
- 4.15 In addition, information on how to access the Health Visiting service is provided to every family with children under the age of 5 at the welfare checks carried out by the Council.
- 4.16 As families have begun to settle in, certain needs are starting to emerge, the first one being how to support host families to help Ukrainian families with grief and trauma as a result of the war.

- 4.17 Work is currently being undertaken to understand the needs more and how the council and partners can best help to address these needs. Initial thinking is to hold an information session, following a similar format to the safeguarding session, where information will be provided for the first half of the session, followed by the second half of the session, providing the opportunity for participants to ask questions etc.
- 4.18 In addition, we are looking to adapt/develop an information leaflet of the principles of psychological first aid as a user friendly guide for hosts.
- 4.19 Undoubtedly, as time moves on, more health needs will emerge, the Council will continue to work alongside Host and Ukrainian families to ensure we understand their needs and can signpost/support accordingly, working alongside health colleagues to ensure a proactive and holistic response.

5. Looking Ahead

- 5.1 The scheme requires a six month initial commitment from hosts. A number of guests have now been with hosts for more than three months. A recent survey of hosts has confirmed that the majority of guests will be able to remain with existing hosts. In addition we have contacted all those that have expressed an interest in hosting to determine whether they are still available and what provision they are able to offer. In the meantime we are working with a very small number of guests on re-hosting within the initial six month period. It is worth saying that over 95% of guest are still with their original hosts.
- 5.2 We know through on-line surveys we have conducted that for a lot of guests employment is a priority. Many have already found employment locally and others are keen to do so. The economic development team are working with DWP colleagues to develop a pathway. There is also a lot of organisation taking place within the Ukraine community to communicate with local employers who have in at least one case presented to potential employees. A number of 'drop in' sessions with DWP have also been successfully delivered,
- 5.3 In terms of provision over the summer this has been centred on the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) supported by a number of voluntary sector initiatives and access to provision provided by charities such as the National Trust and free or subsidised provision from the commercial sector. The Ukrainian community have also arranged employment events including an arts / employment event which was held in Calcot along with presentations from local businesses looking for staff.
- 5.4 Ongoing support for hosts and guests is key to ensure that any emerging issues and concerns are dealt with quickly but also to ensure that local delivery remains relevant and co-ordinated.
- 5.5 It is proposed that in the coming weeks the Ukraine response will transfer to Housing to sit alongside other migration related work-streams.

6. Conclusion(s)

- 6.1 The Homes for Ukraine Scheme required a quick and agile response from statutory and voluntary sector. Some areas such as guest payments were initially very challenging until we could get systems such as pre-paid debit cards in place. Other areas such as DBS checks have presented challenges as we went through changes

of guidance. We have now reached a 'business as usual' stage in terms of day to day provision and our focus is on the implications of the six month milestone for guests and hosts.

- 6.2 West Berkshire residents like those elsewhere have shown generosity in opening up their homes to those Ukrainians. The Council and its statutory and voluntary sector partners have sought to deliver an effective scheme at local level.

7. Consultation and Engagement

Education, Ukraine Hub and Public Health were consulted and contributed to this report.

8. Appendices

None

Background Papers:

None

Health and Wellbeing Priorities Supported:

The proposals will support the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- ☐ Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- ☐ Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- ☒ Help families and young children in early years
- ☒ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
- ☒ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The proposals contained in this report will support the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities by providing ongoing support for Ukrainian families.
