

Report to: Lead Member for Adult Social Care & Health

Date of meeting: 24 May 2022

By: Director of Adult Social Care

Title: Homes for Ukraine – Community support

Purpose: To provide further grant funding to three Voluntary Action Groups (“VAs”) to enable them to support Ukrainian refugees to integrate into communities and connect with fellow refugees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Agree to a grant payment being made that enables each of 3 VAs to plan and implement essential refugee support functions for a period of 12-months;**
- (2) Agree that the proposed funding to be provided is £490,000 to be distributed across three VAs which between them cover the whole East Sussex area; and**
- (3) Delegate authority to the Director of Adult Social Care to take all steps necessary to implement the scheme.**

1 Background

- 1.1 People and communities across East Sussex have responded to the government’s Homes for Ukraine (“HfU”) scheme, opening their homes and communities to people fleeing Ukraine. Data collated by the HfU shows that hosts opening their homes to refugees are more likely to be located in the more rural areas and in smaller communities of East Sussex across Wealden, Rother, and Lewes District, with fewer people, at this stage, in the main conurbations of Hastings and Eastbourne.
- 1.2 The HfU figures in Appendix 1 demonstrate the spread of hosts and refugees by District and Borough; figures are correct as of 10th May 2022. These figures are shared daily with public sector partners and the three VAs. The VAs are:
 - 3VA (covering Wealden Eastbourne and Lewes)
 - Hastings Voluntary Action (covering Hastings)
 - Rother Voluntary Action (covering Rother)
- 1.3 The government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per refugee to councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and to fully integrate into communities; this funding is not ringfenced. This funding includes a £200 welcome payment provided to each refugee who arrives in East Sussex. The government is also providing funding for councils to administer optional ‘thank you’ payments at the £350 per sponsoring household per month. This funding is ringfenced. The government is also providing additional funding to councils to provide education services for children from families arriving from Ukraine under this scheme. Based on current figures, the anticipated funding from government is approximately £14m.
- 1.4 Information provided by our voluntary sector partners and community networks has highlighted the challenges refugees are encountering in settling into their new communities. These challenges include social isolation, difficulty in travelling and networking, inability to connect with refugees located in other parts of the county and mental health and wellbeing support and activities.
- 1.5 The VAs have been working in partnership with East Sussex County Council (“ESCC”) to assist in developing networks of support in each of their areas and they have been

distributing the £200 cash payments, referred to in paragraph 1.3, to refugees who have arrived through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

- 1.6 Insight from the VAs has shown that people and communities have set up support for refugees in and around their communities and in many cases, this is being managed by local volunteers, with, in some cases, support from other local organisations and charities. The level of support required cannot be maintained without further resourcing, funding and the coordination of activities across the community, voluntary sector and statutory services.

2 Supporting information

- 2.1 The VAs have significant experience in connecting local people, signposting to statutory and other services and building a supportive network for vulnerable groups. They are currently conducting several functions outside of their core business including distributing support payments and bus passes on behalf of the local councils across East Sussex. Their current capacity is stretched and resources have been diverted to this activity.

- 2.2 The ability to support and integrate refugees into their local communities will be crucial in maintaining host/refugee relationships and ensuring refugees have access to essential support services. This will aid refugees' transition to self-sufficiency and help to minimise community tensions.

- 2.3 Neither ESCC nor the district and borough councils have the capacity to support the level of local support and networking required over and above core services and this activity has historically been arranged by Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises as they have the experience and capability to provide it.

- 2.4 The level and type of support and activities community groups and voluntary organisations are involved with are diverse and wide-ranging depending on the locality and local circumstances. However, feedback indicates these activities include transportation, social interaction, well-being activities and support with accessing services.

2.5 Transportation

- Providing transport, such as community transport, for refugees to access activities and services in other localities e.g., from rural areas to a main conurbation
- This can also include rail and bus services to access services, benefits, education and employment opportunities.

2.6 Social interaction

- Organising meeting spaces for refugees, hosts, a community group or voluntary organisation to deliver an activity or service
- Connecting young people to each other and to activities to prevent social isolation.

2.7 Well-being activities

- Social, recreational, and wellbeing activities and materials for refugees as well as befriending services to help people connect with others from their home country
- Access to language courses and other educational activities.

2.8 Accessing services

- Access to a local foodbank or food partnership activity, access to support for registering for universal credit, providing mental health, wellbeing, and trauma support
- Support associated with signposting, form filling, making appointments, interview preparation and CV writing.

3 Conclusion and recommendations

- 3.1 The VAs can provide a range of support and integration functions to enable Ukrainian refugees to settle into communities across East Sussex. The VAs are prepared to conduct this activity provided appropriate resources and funding is available.

- 3.2 ESCC has provided some initial funding through a £10,000 grant to provide immediate support. This funding was not sufficient to cover the costs associated with activity resulting from the HfU scheme and therefore does not support the sustainability of the functions within this report nor does it support the longer-term planning of activities set out above.
- 3.3 It is recommended a further grant payment is made that enables each VA to plan and implement the essential support functions for a period of 12-months. The proposed funding is £490,000The VAs will work in collaboration with ESCC officers to agree the criteria, monitoring and evaluation processes for the creation and administration of a support fund.
- 3.4 The funding will enable these VAs to provide the necessary resources to implement the targeted support and activities that have been identified and will enable them to distribute small grants to local community groups, charities and other organisations who are supporting Ukrainian refugees.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Appendix 1 - Figures for Homes for Ukraine applications and know arrivals as of 10th May 2022