

**Report to:** Lead Member for Adult Social Care & Health

**Date of meeting:** 6 September 2022

**By:** Director of Adult Social Care & Health

**Title:** Homes for Ukraine Move On Support Programme

**Purpose:** To seek Lead Member approval for a funded programme of move on support for Ukrainians entering East Sussex under Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Family Scheme

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health is recommended to:

1. approve the allocation of £1,380,325 of the Homes for Ukraine grant to provide a Move On Support Programme as set out in the report, to enable and support planned move on and reduce the risk of homelessness;
2. to note that this work will include strategic alignment of the Homes for Ukraine programme with broader work across housing and social care partners to improve access to affordable housing in a way that promotes fairness and equity, and;
3. delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to approve the assurance framework to ensure conditions of grant funding are met.

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## **Background**

1. The Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme has enabled nearly 1612 Ukrainian adults and children to apply for visas based on matching with 667 sponsors in East Sussex, as of 10 August 2022. This is amongst the highest in the UK. Given that over 70% have already arrived and the ongoing war in Ukraine, there is reason to believe that at least that number will arrive, and in addition more people have taken advantage of the Ukraine Family Scheme (numbers not known).
2. Hosting under HfU sponsorship is designed to last for 6 to 12 months, whilst the visa allows Ukrainians to remain in the UK for up to 3 years. This means that between summer 2022 and the end of 2023 it is likely that most Ukrainian families will be leaving the initial sponsorship arrangement in East Sussex and seeking to secure alternative accommodation in one of four possible ways:
  - Leaving the UK (or leaving East Sussex)
  - Extending sponsorship arrangements, if this an option, including rematching to another host
  - Moving to independent accommodation (most likely private rented)
  - Homelessness
3. A recent ONS Survey has indicated that 25% of hosts do not intend to continue hosting beyond the 6-month period. Further work is planned at a local level to gather insight on intentions and plans, which will help us target support to those that need it most.

4. This presents an acute homelessness risk specific to this group given that the Ukrainians will reach the end of their sponsorship periods within a relatively short period of time of each other. As this can be pre-empted (unlike individual cases of homelessness for other county residents), a targeted response is therefore recommended and is in line with the level of support afforded to other county residents.
5. The HfU programme is actively seeking to support positive accommodation outcomes in East Sussex by working closely with partners on a range of measures to support independence, e.g.:
  - Information, advice, and signposting to services that support economic independence and move on, including an employment support offer
  - Support to sustain sponsor arrangements, or to re-match
  - Commissioning services that can support wellbeing, community integration, sustainment of sponsorship and planned move on
6. However, feedback from housing authorities in East Sussex and across the UK is that they are very concerned that the fundamental lack of a supply of affordable accommodation and pre-existing housing pressures will severely impact on the short to medium term housing prospects of Ukrainians, which could result with significant numbers at risk of homelessness. This may be particularly acute where there are high concentrations of Ukrainian families in rural parts of the County, who may have even more limited affordable housing options.
7. Recent years have placed the housing market under extreme pressures, including the social and private rented sector. In addition, COVID-19 policies to ensure vulnerable people were protected from homelessness has led to surges in the use of Temporary Accommodation (TA), reducing the availability of TA and increasing demand for move-on accommodation. This has exacerbated a situation where rents have been pushed up, competition for rental accommodation is intense and private sector landlords are able to choose tenants who present the lowest risk.
8. The risk of high numbers of homelessness presentations is particularly acute in the autumn and winter of 2022/23, as from October 2022 most hosts will start to reach the minimum 6-month period for hosting. From October to December 2022, 445 hosts who currently accommodate 1032 Ukrainian guests will reach the 6-month mark. This will coincide with the rising costs of running a home, which may increase the financial burdens associated with hosting.
9. There is an urgent and pressing need to make available support to enable as many Ukrainians as possible to move on in a planned way. The government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person to councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities; accessing stable and affordable accommodation is an essential part of this.
10. The Ukrainian families or groups being hosted include significant numbers of children and young people. 381 hosts (57% of the total) are giving a home to a family or group of Ukrainians that include children in their household.
11. District & Borough Councils across East Sussex already provide a range of support to other groups to encourage and enable move on, and the proposals in this paper will ensure a similar offer is made available to Ukrainian families who need this. Current offers include the following (the details vary across District and Borough areas):
  - Interest Free loans for rent in advance or deposits
  - Clearing rent arrears to sustain tenancies

- Rent guarantor schemes
- Private Sector Leasing Schemes
- Tenancy sustainment support
- Landlord Incentive schemes
- Tenancy document support including reference support
- 'Moving On Up' grant of up to £3000 per person (this programme currently ends March 2023)

## **Supporting information**

12. The HfU scheme is a unique scheme which has been running for less than five months. It is very different to other schemes in its funding and how it is organised. To support our proposals and offer we gather evidence from our experience of this scheme as well as from other schemes or scenarios. We also use information and data released by other organisations such as those operating on behalf of central government.
13. In a recent ONS survey released on 15 July, two thirds of current arrivals said they plan to stay in the UK. For East Sussex and based on current arrivals as of 10 August, this would equate to over 900 people and for anticipated arrivals this would equate to 1241 people. In terms of the number of families this would be 394 and for anticipated arrivals it would be 484. As set out in paragraph 2, guests will seek accommodation in four ways.
14. To assist with our planning, we make several assumptions, one of which relates to the number of people entering the homelessness pathway. Currently we are assuming 30% will do so. In terms of numbers this equates to 484 individuals and 200 families. The 30% homelessness assumption figure is our best estimate in terms of the numbers who may enter this programme. We are conducting an exercise in September to test our reasonable worst case planning scenario which looks to identify the number of people who may present as homeless and we will adjust our assumption figure with the appropriate evidence.
15. The cost of homelessness figures varies between organisations as calculations contain a number of different variables such as emergency accommodation or accommodation provided through the private rented sector. This variation can range from £8000 to >£22,000 based on an average family of 2.4 people living in a two-bedroom property.
16. When we calculate the cost of homelessness against the number of arrivals as of 10 August this equates to between £1.7m and £4.576m.
17. We have assessed that the key to independent living for guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme falls into three interconnected categories:
  - Ability to speak English
  - Employments
  - Housing
18. The most recent ONS survey released on 10 August indicates that:
  - 25% of hosts do not intend to continue hosting beyond six months
  - 38% would consider hosting for up to 12 months

- 40% said an increase in value of the £350 monthly thankyou payments would be an incentive to continue hosting.

19. A link to the full ONS dataset can be found below here [Experiences of Homes for Ukraine scheme sponsors, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

### **Homes for Ukraine Move On Support Programme**

20. The move on programme is a homeless prevention programme and the proposals in this paper will ensure a similar offer is made to Ukrainian families that is currently made to other groups. The usual criteria is that an applicant has made a homeless application to the council, and is considered to be homeless, or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
21. The Afghan and Syrian refugee resettlement support is dealt with slightly differently. This scheme is property-led, which means the local authorities have to secure accommodation first, to which a family is then matched, typically from a refugee facility outside the UK or hotel accommodation provided by the Home Office.
22. This means housing authorities procure accommodation in the private sector and pay a deposit, rent in advance and void costs (while the property is empty, waiting for the family to arrive) to the landlord. This is funded by the resettlement grant that the LA receives from the Home Office. If they became homeless, then they would access the same service as any other homeless household in terms of rent deposit etc.
23. The aim of this move on package is to offer support much earlier – thus removing the prerequisite to be threatened with homelessness and making a homeless application.
24. Ukrainians are entering existing services and benefit streams relatively soon after their arrival; this includes Universal Credit (UC) and employment. Therefore, the transition to mainstream is already happening. However, most people will not have the financial backing to enter the private rented sector locally, even if they are on UC or in employment. Most landlords will require an income beyond the means of most guests and without support many guests will inevitably enter the homelessness pathway.
25. It is possible that the move-on programme and the support available will be communicated widely with the potential for numbers entering the programme will escalate dramatically. As set out in paragraph 2, guests will have a number of routes to securing alternative accommodation and it is the aim of this programme to prevent one of those routes which is entering the homelessness pathway.
26. If numbers did escalate dramatically, for example if our assumption doubled to 60%, then the cost of the programme (<£2.8m) would still be preferable to the upper range of the costs of homelessness (>£4.5m). In the unlikely event that the number of people entering the move-on programme was predicted to outstrip the available funding through the Homes for Ukraine programme, there are several mitigations that would reduce the impact:
  - 23% of guests have indicated an intent to leave the UK
  - Accommodation may be available in other parts of the country at more affordable rates relative to average wage levels
  - There is an opportunity to re-profile the budget and unit costs
  - The scheme could be capped in terms of numbers entering the programme
  - The lack of available accommodation across the county will invariably minimise numbers

### ***Additional Host Payments***

27. We propose to offer one-off incentive payments to hosts who are willing to extend their placements beyond the 12-month period set out in the original programme, with a further incentive at the 18-month point.
28. The estimated costs of additional host payments are £337,500.
29. It has also been noted that some hosts may also be willing to formalise their existing arrangements to provide longer term accommodation, for example through lodging or letting self-contained properties, which can be explored as part of this programme. This approach is broadly equivalent to the offer available to other citizens who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

### ***Move On Support***

30. It is proposed the following move on support package can be accessed at any time during a guests' stay and prior to any homeless application, therefore removing the usual criteria attached to other schemes:
- Five weeks rent as a deposit
  - One month's rent in advance
  - Six months guarantor agreement between the landlord and D&Bs
  - Additional landlord incentive grant
  - Additional guest incentive grant
  - Tenancy set up payment – to help towards costs of furnishing a property where Moving on Up funding has not been accessed
  - In addition, support will be provided to the host, to enable them to prepare a reference for their guest, in lieu of a tenancy reference.
  - Tenancy sustainment support for the first six months would also be provided after moving on.
31. The estimated costs of the proposed move on package are £1,042,825.
32. The total costs of both measures is estimated at **£1,380,325**.

### ***Eligibility***

33. Move on support is available for guests placed in East Sussex through the HfU programme and can be made available for those under the Family Visa scheme, subject to funding availability and take-up.

### ***Financial Implications***

34. ESCC has had funding confirmed of £9.3m from the HfU grant, and we expect further funding relating to future arrivals of £7.4m at £10.5k per guest. Of this, £6.7m is either spent or committed currently, leaving a balance of £10.3m. In addition, we expect to receive ring-fenced funding for host payments and education.
35. This Move On Support Package, as well as improving outcomes and leading to secure and stable accommodation, will offset the possible costs of homelessness, which is estimated as at least £8,000 per year per family.
36. For example, if 25% of Ukrainian families present as homeless and need one year in Temporary Accommodation, this will cost an equivalent amount as this Move On Support Programme, but families will still need longer term accommodation.

## **Administration**

37. District & Borough Councils have been grant funded to increase their capacity to administer their part of the requirements of HfU. It is proposed that this grant is used to cover any additional staffing resources to administer the Homes for Ukraine Move On Support Programme.
38. The move on programme will allocate funding on outcomes and the housing authorities will invoice quarterly to cover costs incurred. There are elements of this proposal where funding is accessed at different stages of the process, for example, host incentives at 12 and 18-months will extend hosting relationships therefore not requiring people to access move-on support until the relationship comes to an end. Additionally, rent deposits and rent guarantees may be re-distributed once a guest moves on to secure independent accommodation. We would only look to allocate the remaining budget where there is a clear and robust case for doing so.

## **Governance**

39. Our current governance arrangement is through the Directorate Management Team (DMT) and the Corporate Management Team. We have agreed with DMT that we will set up a Programme Board, chaired by an Assistant Director, to provide strengthened governance to the HfU programme. The Board will involve partners including a Housing authority lead.
40. East Sussex Housing Officers Group (ESHOG) will oversee implementation of the HfU Move On Support Programme. ESHOG will work closely with the associated Homes for Ukraine funded employability programme (Support into Work) to ensure that people are accessing the support they need to become independent both in terms of housing and employment. The Housing Managers Group will implement and keep the incentive package under review to reflect emerging demand and changes to government guidance and good practice. ESHOG will ensure that there is alignment with the objectives of the HfU programme and other schemes to support people in need of housing and housing support.
41. There will be robust performance and financial management arrangements in place to monitor the impact of delivery; arrangements will include the ability to review and evaluate the move-on programme. The East Sussex Housing Options Officers Group will include a HfU representative as well as other ESCC representatives.
42. Key performance measures may include:
- Number of people accessing support from the Homes for Ukraine service / Ukraine Family Visa Scheme
  - Number of people supported to sustain a host placement beyond 6 months / 12 months / 18 months
  - Number of people supported to access move on accommodation in the private rented sector
  - Number of people supported to relocate out of county
  - Number of people presenting as homeless
  - Number of people placed in emergency accommodation
43. Government funding in support of Homes for Ukraine, via a retrospective quarterly grant claim process, places a responsibility on the host authority (East Sussex County Council) to ensure appropriate governance and financial oversight is in place. The Chief Finance Officer, with support from the Programme Board, will review existing oversight arrangements and put in place processes to ensure that it can be evidenced

that funding has been allocated to meet evidenced need, with consideration of value for money and performance information.

44. Other local authorities across the country are looking at how best to support guests once the host/guest relationship comes to an end. Many are looking at similar support and incentive schemes.

### **Strategic Alignment, Learning and Development**

45. Supply of affordable housing is extremely limited in East Sussex, which affects the delivery of a range of services across housing and social care, including the Homes for Ukraine programme. Move on support and incentives can vary considerably between programmes and housing authorities.
46. It is recommended that a task and finish group is formed and led by the housing authorities, bringing together partners from across the sector to improve access to affordable housing. Membership will include the housing authorities, the sustainment service provider (BHT Sussex) and ESCC, including the Skills and Employability team. Activity will include developing a strategy to improve access to affordable housing, support joint working, and engagement with accommodation providers.
47. Good practice developed through the Homes for Ukraine programme can also be shared and adapted for other service areas.

### **Communications**

48. ESCC has established communication channels with hosts and guests, including regular newsletters, which can be used to raise awareness of the HfU Move On Support Programme, alongside promotion by partners working on HfU in the statutory and voluntary sectors.
49. Housing authorities will ensure their housing options team are aware of the HfU Move On Support Programme and eligibility requirements.

### **Next Steps**

50. The Homes for Ukraine Finance update is set out at Appendix 1.
51. More detailed costings for the move-on programme are set out at Appendix 2.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

52. The HfU visa scheme has successfully enabled over 1600 Ukrainian adults and children to apply for visas to live in the UK for up to 3 years, initially with hosts in East Sussex. In order for them to settle successfully in the context of a very restricted supply of affordable housing, support will be needed in order to reduce the risk of homelessness.
53. The HfU grant enables local Councils to put in place support to help Ukrainian families settle in the UK, and it is recommended that approximately £1.3m of this grant is allocated for the HfU Move On Support Programme set out in this paper.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All Members.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A