

## HOMES FOR UKRAINE SCHEME

### Hampshire County Council update – 06.04.22

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*Please note, this information is accurate at the time of writing, but the situation continues to change swiftly and is subject to revision at short notice.*

#### OVERVIEW

The County Council continues to work with key local partners to enable immediate support and assistance to Ukrainian refugees (guests) arriving in Hampshire under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Partner organisations include District and Borough councils and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service, as well as the NHS, and Hampshire Constabulary.

#### Funding remains unchanged:

- The Government is providing £10,500 per person to upper tier councils to provide support for guests/guest families
- Schools will receive additional Government funding to support the educational needs of Ukrainian children and young adults staying in England
- Sponsors receive a £350 per month Government-funded 'thank you' payment. We are expecting the Government to confirm next week how this will be paid.

As of 31 March, 65,000 visa applications had been confirmed, and 29,200 Ukrainians had been issued with a UK visa\*.

\*Source: Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) visa data - GOV.UK [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data)

#### SITUATION REPORT

In line with central Government priorities, Hampshire County Council, with partners in District and Borough councils, Health, and the Fire Service in Hampshire, is focusing efforts on the support that Ukrainian refugees and their sponsors require for phase one of the scheme which seeks to match guests with individual sponsors.

#### Home visits and checks progress

Progress has been made regarding the process using the available national guidance, and the following is now agreed:

- Hampshire County Council Children's Services will aim to arrange an appointment via telephone for the initial sponsor home visit once the sponsor data is received from Government
- A Fire Safety Officer will attend the visit alongside representatives from Children's Services

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- Hampshire County Council and the Fire Safety Officer will complete the initial, basic check of the home on behalf of District councils, based on the agreed checklist (Appendix 1)
  - Any housing issues identified at the visit will be immediately referred to the appropriate District to follow up
  - Any safeguarding issues will be immediately referred to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub team
  - On completion of the initial visit, Hampshire County Council will update the central Government data Portal as appropriate
  - As there is also a requirement to visit the host family, Hampshire County Council Children's Services will revisit once the Ukrainian family has arrived.

## **Safeguarding**

Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks are required of all sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine scheme (enhanced DBS checks for those sponsors hosting Ukrainian families with children).

These will commence as part of the home visit process and will be undertaken by Hampshire County Council; it has been confirmed that DBS checks do not need to be undertaken before visas are issued.

## **Requests to use council buildings for multiple occupancy**

The UK Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched in March 2022. Phase one of the scheme allows individuals to register as sponsors and support a matched Ukrainian individual and their immediate family members in applying for a visa to come to the UK. Individual sponsors are asked to provide accommodation in their own house or separate self-contained residential accommodation that is unoccupied.

In line with central Government priorities, Hampshire County Council, with partners in District and Borough councils, Health, and the Fire Service in Hampshire, is focusing efforts on the support that Ukrainian refugees and their sponsors require for phase one of the scheme. This includes undertaking sponsor and accommodation checks, financial arrangements and providing help to access schools and health services.

Charities, businesses and faith and community groups will have a significant role to play in connecting individuals with those who wish to sponsor and wish to be sponsored and, of course, providing a warm welcome to individuals arriving to the UK.

The Government has indicated that it will expand the Homes for Ukraine scheme to enable organisations and community groups to sponsor multiple Ukrainian guests, but whilst interest can be registered, there is no guidance to enable this route at this time. The County Council and its partners have received generous offers of support from a number of community and voluntary organisations who would like to offer sponsorship in this way. This includes enquiries regarding the potential use of County Council buildings as group accommodation.

There are a number of important additional considerations that apply to multiple occupancy accommodation in comparison to single private dwellings. The County Council is therefore awaiting further guidance from Government before determining whether any of its buildings would meet the requirements of an organisation sponsor scheme.

When this further information is available, the County Council will engage with the community groups that have expressed a desire to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme

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in this way. In the meantime, organisations can register their interest in acting as sponsors, on the Government's Homes for Ukraine website.

### **Wellbeing support**

The County Council's Adult Social Care team is liaising with NHS representatives regarding how support will be provided. GP support and the provision of crisis mental health assistance is a key consideration.

### **Fostering**

Anyone interested in fostering an unaccompanied refugee child (from any country) can register their interest at: [www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/fostering](http://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/fostering)

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Website**

The County Council has further updated its dedicated 'Support for Ukraine' webpages ([www.hants.gov.uk/ukraine](http://www.hants.gov.uk/ukraine)). These pages now feature sections for sponsors, guests and anyone wanting to help in other ways.

Regular updates from central Government are also being added as soon as possible and signposting to useful related information is included and reviewed regularly.

Latest additions include a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section to assist the public and individual sponsors, and advice and support for school and college admissions, as well as funded provision for adult learning, e.g. English language courses.

### **Sponsor communications**

An initial letter to sponsors has been produced and will be issued imminently. This letter will be sent to each sponsor once they are approved through the national registration system. The letter includes useful information about the purpose of home visits, the requirement for DBS checks, financial support – for both sponsors and guests, and education and health care access for guests.

### **Media**

The County Council has issued the following statement in response to news media enquiries relating to the use of local authority buildings to accommodate Ukrainian families arriving in the county:

*"The County Council is currently working with District and Borough Councils, as well as other partner organisations, on the implementation of the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. The first phase of this scheme is focused on enabling and supporting individual sponsors who can provide suitable accommodation in private residential dwellings. At this stage, the scheme does not cover the use of non-residential accommodation which would require considerable work to convert to suitable residential accommodation.*

*"The County Council will consider and respond to any future guidance issued by the Government in relation to accommodation under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, as the situation evolves."*

The County Council is also aware that members of the news media have attempted to contact Hampshire schools and refugee families directly – for media reporting purposes.

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However, due to the sensitivities of the situation, introductions to guests and any liaison via local schools are discouraged and will not be facilitated at the current time.

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## **Appendix 1: Accommodation Checklist**

Date of Visit:

Name of Officer completing Form:

Sponsor Name:

Address:

Guest Names:

### **Questions**

- Does the property appear to be in a reasonable state of cleanliness and repair?
- Are there appropriate sleeping arrangements for guests?
- Is there any indication of overcrowding?
- Is there an adequate kitchen and bathroom?
- Does the property have heating?
- Are gas appliances safe and gas safety checked?
- Are the electrics safe and working?
- Is there evidence of excessive damp and/or mould?
- Are there locks on windows and doors at entry level?
- Can you move around safely in the property?

To be asked in consultation with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service:

- Is there a working smoke detector on each floor?
- Is the property fire safe in the opinion of the Fire and Rescue Service?
- Is there a working carbon monoxide detector in any room containing a solid fuel burning appliance (e.g., coal fire or wood burning stove etc)?