

## **Appendix A – Homes for Ukraine Case Study**

### **Background**

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

This scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and to their immediate family members (for example spouse/partner and children under 18) who may be of other nationalities, to be sponsored to come to the UK. Applicants can apply from Ukraine or from any other third country.

Currently children under the age of 18 must be applying as part of a family unit which includes their parent or legal guardian to be eligible for the scheme. That family unit must stay together in the same sponsor accommodation.

Definitions:

“Sponsor” or “sponsors” refers to an individual, group or organisation who has been approved to accommodate an individual or household from Ukraine under the “Homes for Ukraine” sponsorship scheme.

“Guest” or “guests” refers to an individual or household previously resident in Ukraine, prior to 1 January 2022, who have secured a visa under the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme, which enables them to be housed by a sponsor.

Sponsors can live anywhere in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) and can be of any nationality, provided they have at least six months’ permission to stay in the UK. In order to become a sponsor, there are a number of eligibility requirements that need to be met, which includes:

- Over the age of 18
- Provide a valid ID document
- Be able to confirm that they can offer accommodation for a period of at least 6 months
- Ensure all adults of the sponsor household meet suitability requirements<sup>1</sup>

### **Sponsor Expectations**

The government guidance lays out what is expected from being a sponsor, predominately, to support and help their guest(s) to adapt to life in the UK, initially on arrival making sure they’re comfortable in their accommodation and setup with the basics, including having enough food and essential supplies like toiletries and checking they have access to a mobile phone and the internet so they can stay in touch with family and friends.

Every guest is entitled to a £200 interim payment to help with subsistence costs is provided by the Council. Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme people will also have access to public services, work and benefits. Guests will have the right to work in the UK. There is no obligation for guests to work in exchange for accommodation. Work undertaken by a guest must be paid and not, in any way, linked to their sponsorship arrangement.

Sponsors should also try to help direct their guests to public services. For example, this could involve helping them contact and register with a local GP and NHS dentist.

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<sup>1</sup> To ensure individuals meet the requirements for approval as a sponsor under the Scheme, the Home Office conduct security and criminal checks on all adults aged 18 and over who will be living in the same household as the guests. This includes checks against government databases and those of other third parties such as the Police National Computer.

The Home Office will make these checks when considering the visa application. If, as a result, adults who are required to undergo checks, do not meet the suitability requirements for approval as a sponsor the visa application may be held, and the applicant offered alternative options. The Home Office will consider whether any information received as a result of these checks could represent a risk to the applicant, in particular if the applicant is a child or vulnerable adult, when deciding whether the sponsor is suitable.

While existing sponsorship relationships should be sustained for six months or longer, in a minority of cases this will not be possible, and as a Council we are seeing a number of relationships breaking down, which draws on a considerable amount of officer's time and capacity.

### **Relationship Breakdown**

One particular case the team dealt with involved a Ukrainian mother<sup>2</sup> [known as Zara] and her 8 year old son [known as Alex] staying with a sponsor [known as Maggie] in village location in North Northamptonshire.

Zara and Alex arrived in early April, having been collected from the airport by a friend of Maggie, who had prepared her home for them. Maggie, supported by officers, helped Zara access universal credits and apply for a school place for Alex.

By late April the relationship between Maggie and Zara started to deteriorate to the point where temporary accommodation had to be sought. This is not without its own difficulties given the pressures from the current homeless caseload in North Northamptonshire (1,000 homeless households currently being dealt with by the Housing Team, along with over 230 households in temporary accommodation, either as a statutory duty or rough sleepers).

A month after arriving in the UK, Zara and Alex moved into temporary accommodation (TA) in the nearby town, where she is still residing. The day before they moved in to TA, Alex started school in the village and to provide stability for him and given the pressures on the school admissions team, he has stayed there, with a taxi being provided to get him to school and back.

One of the Communities & Wellbeing officers, who is also supporting our Afghan families has been providing ongoing support for Zara around the possibility of privately renting or being rematched with another sponsor in the area she is residing. We have agreed to keep Alex at his current school until the end of term, but given Zara wants to stay in the area, arrangements will need to be made for Alex to move schools over the summer.

This is a very brief outline of the situation, and so far we have had to deal with a further eight breakdowns, each one resulting in various levels of involvement by officers from across several teams to ensure each case is dealt with appropriately. Along with this, we potentially have a further two or three which may result in the guest(s) going into TA or being rematched.

The costs associated with breakdowns are being covered by the council from the government funding being drawn down at £10,500 per guest. The costs include, using this case study as an example:

- Temporary accommodation at £40 per night
- School taxi at £140 per week
- Essential start up items i.e. cutlery and crockery, bed linen, towels etc.
- Emergency guest payment totalling £400
- DBS & safeguarding checks

In the other cases, additional costs have included hotel accommodation, transport from the guest's home to the TA, travel expenses for officers and agency costs for temporary staff.

On a final note, not only are officers dealing with current placement breakdowns, they are also starting to receive a number of queries as to what the next stage is at the six month point, where the expectations of sponsors is on the council providing / facilitating move on accommodation for their Ukrainian guests. This is a national issue which has been escalated through the Regional Migration Partnership.

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<sup>2</sup> To ensure confidentiality no real names have been used.