

Agenda – Local Government and Housing Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 5

Meeting date: 22 June 2022

Meeting time: 08.45

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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Pre-meeting (08.45 – 09.00)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.00)

2 Inquiry into the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers – evidence session 5: Minister for Social Justice

(09.00 – 10.15)

(Pages 1 – 31)

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice

Chrishan Kamalan, Head of Race and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Policy, Welsh Government

James Searle, Head of Crime and Justice Team, Welsh Government

3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the following items: 4 and 8

(10.15)

4 Inquiry into the provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers – consideration of the evidence received under item 2

(10.15 – 10.30)

Break (10.30 – 10.40)



5 Housing Ukrainian refugees – evidence session 1

(10.40 – 11.30)

(Pages 32 – 58)

Naomi Alleyne, Director, Social Services and Housing, Welsh Local Government Association

Gaynor Toft, Interim Head of Housing and Public Protection Services, Pembrokeshire County Council

Anne Hubbard, Manager, Wales Strategic Migration Partnership

Break (11.30 – 11.35)

6 Housing Ukrainian refugees – evidence session 2

(11.35 – 12.25)

(Pages 59 – 64)

Reynette Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, Oasis

Natalie Zhivkova, Volunteering Policy Officer, Wales Council for Voluntary Action

The Reverend Aled Edwards, Chief Executive, Cytûn – Churches together in Wales

7 Paper(s) to note

(12.20)

(Page 65)

7.1 Letter from the Minister for Social Justice in relation to housing Ukrainian refugees

(Pages 66 – 70)

8 Housing Ukrainian refugees – consideration of the evidence received under items 5 and 6

(12.25 – 12.30)

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WRITTEN EVIDENCE PAPER TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Minister for Social Justice, June 2022

I welcome this opportunity to provide information in relation to the Committee's inquiry into provision of sites for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller persons.

I have addressed each of the Committee's areas of interest below and I look forward to discussing further with the Committee on Wednesday 22 June.

It may be helpful at the start of this evidence paper to outline the recent work on the Anti-Racist Wales Action plan which includes Goals and Actions related to Gypsies, Roma and Traveller People.

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (June 2022)

1. The Welsh Government is taking action to make Wales an Anti-racist nation. On 7 June, the Welsh Government published the 'Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan' to tackle systemic and institutionalised racism.
2. Drawing on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities' experiences of racism, and race inequality, the Plan sets out a series of actions from across Government to make a real difference to the lives of people. The actions are focused on the next two years, set against the vision of a Wales which is anti-racist in 2030.
3. The Plan adopts an anti-racist approach which means looking at the ways in which racism is built into our policies, formal and informal rules and regulations, and the way Government works. It focuses on the ways in which racism affects the lives of ethnic minority people, such as their experience of racism in everyday life, service delivery, as part of the workforce and the lack of visible role models in positions of power.
4. The Goals and Actions in the plan cover policy areas across government, including, health, culture, homes and places, employability and skills, education as well as a focus on leadership and representation within Welsh Government and across public services.
5. Within the plan there are Goals and Actions directed at improving the lives of Gypsies, Roma and Traveller people within the policies areas of, education and Welsh language, Health and, Homes and Places.
6. Secure homes of all types, are fundamental to people's well-being and to every aspect of their lives, including their mental and physical health and well-being, their educational opportunity and achievement, their employment outcomes and their social and cultural well-being.
7. Our overall aim is that ethnic minority people are able to live in decent, secure and affordable homes which meet the diversity of their needs. COVID-19 has

brought into sharp focus the importance of appropriate and affordable home for everyone's mental and physical well-being. It has also highlighted the deep inequalities that exist for some people in accessing such homes.

8. The actions related to the *Homes and Places* section of the plan are provided below.

Homes and Places | Standards, provisions and services

Goal

To ensure that standards provision and services around the provision of homes advance race equality, embed anti-racism, equality and human rights, and meet the diverse needs of ethnic minority people.

Action

- Work with ethnic minority-led organisations, local authorities, Housing Associations, Shelter Cymru and Citizens Advice Cymru to demonstrate the information, advice and advocacy needs of ethnic minority people are met in relation to accessing appropriate homes, including Gypsies and Travellers, ethnic minority women and asylum seekers and refugees.

Homes and Places | Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

Goal

To recognise that safe, culturally appropriate accommodation is necessary in order for individuals to flourish in other parts of their lives and to address the lack of site provision and poor quality of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in Wales.

Actions

- Create a national network of transit provision to facilitate travelling life, with consideration for negotiated stopping, as appropriate.
- Pilot additional or new ways of funding permanent provision.
- Explore the potential for a mobile home rental scheme run through social housing in order to improve quality and cost of rental provision in Wales.
- Capital requirement for mobile home rental pilot
- Provide learning and development support to Local Authority Elected Members on Gypsy and Traveller communities' culture, needs and strengths. The specification for the service will be drawn up to ensure the support will go beyond awareness-raising and will include anti-racism
- Commission a three-year pilot programme to provide independent, trusted advice to those seeking to develop private sites
- Review the current funding policy for Gypsy and Traveller sites and assess its effectiveness, with a view to piloting additional or new ways of funding site provision, including support for private sites
- Re-draft the Sites Guidance to ensure that the design and location needs of communities are better reflected in this document
- Commission a national training scheme for Welsh local authority housing options teams, and other relevant professionals, to improve the approach taken and support offered to community members seeking help for homelessness and accommodation issues by creating Gypsy and Traveller "champions" or "leads" in each local authority

- Ensure existing legal mechanisms are fully utilised to ensure compliance with existing legislation

Whether the current Welsh Government framework is ensuring sufficient culturally-appropriate Gypsy and Traveller residential and transit sites across Wales?

9. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are amongst the most marginalised groups in our society. We know these groups often experience discrimination, inequality and a lack of opportunities. We want to ensure that members of these communities are supported to fulfil their potential and make a full contribution to Welsh society.
10. The [Enabling Gypsies, Roma and Travellers plan \(2018\)](#) outlined the breadth of work which the Welsh Government is undertaking to ensure inequalities experienced by these communities are reduced, access to opportunities increased, and relations between these communities and wider society improved.
11. The [Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) placed duties upon local authorities to ensure that sufficient sites are provided. Local Authorities are required to carry out periodical assessments (Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments – GTTA) of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing in (i.e. who live there) or resorting to (i.e. stay in the area from time to time) its area, and to make provision for sites where the assessment identifies an unmet need for mobile home pitches. An assessment must be carried out within each “review period”.. Statutory guidance ([Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments – Welsh Government Guidance \(2015\)](#)) was produced to assist Local Authorities in discharging their duties under Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
12. In 2018 the [Circular 005/2018 – Planning for Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Sites – June 2018](#) guidance was provided on the planning aspects of identifying sustainable sites for Gypsies and Travellers.

The extent to which local planning authorities and Gypsies and Travellers are succeeding in working together, as recommended in Welsh Government guidance, with the aim of identifying sustainable sites for Gypsies and Traveller communities?

13. Our guidance recognises it is imperative that the preferences of community members are given consideration and the relevant Local Authorities work together to decide where the demand for accommodation will arise. We encourage local authorities to work in partnership, and to ensure their assessments are informed by the work of other Local Authorities.

The extent to which local authorities’ Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) are being implemented, monitored and reviewed to ensure they meet the accommodation needs of the traveller community.

14. Section 102 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to submit their Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment reports to the

Welsh Ministers for approval. Welsh Ministers will assess the submitted report to ensure its robustness in terms of compliance with the [guidance](#), quality of engagement with relevant individuals and calculation of needs.

15. Welsh Ministers may approve the assessment as submitted, approve the assessment with modifications, or reject the assessment and require a new assessment be undertaken. If reports are not approved as submitted, the Welsh Government will consult with the particular Local Authority in relation to the necessary changes required.
16. As a result of the pandemic there have been delayed to the GTAAs being completed and submitted by Local Authorities in 2021/22. A majority of local authorities have now completed and submitted a GTAA and accompanying reports. The requirement was to have done so by 24 February 2022. The Welsh Government is now assessing these reports.
17. Once the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment has been approved by Welsh Ministers, Local Authorities will be subject to a legal duty to exercise their functions to provide mobile home pitches to meet the identified needs. Section 56 of the Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013 provides the power for Local Authorities to do this.

To explore the potential challenges for local authorities and the Welsh Government in providing suitable and sufficient accommodation sites for traveller communities.

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To explore what the implications will be of the provisions in the UK Government's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

22. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act ("the Bill"/"the Act") UK Government legislation and applies equally to Wales and England. Certain provisions of the Act make provision with regard to devolved matters or confer or impose functions on Devolved Welsh Authorities. These have been managed using Legislative Consent Memorandums and Motions, as outlined below.
23. The Act also includes provisions on unauthorised encampments, which will impact on Gypsy and Traveller communities in England and Wales. This evidence sets out the impact of these provisions, and the action the Welsh Government has taken in response. This includes action with police partners in Wales.

Impact of the provisions on unauthorised encampments in the Act

24. The Act creates a new offence for England and Wales and an accompanying power for the police to seize property (including vehicles) where individuals reside or intend to reside on land with a vehicle. This new offence does not align with our approach as a government. The Welsh Government focuses on engagement with communities, investment for adequate provision of authorised sites and enabling local authorities to meet the accommodation needs (residential and transit) of Gypsy and Traveller communities.
25. The Minister for Social Justice has repeatedly raised concerns directly to UK Government about the provisions on unauthorised encampments and asked them to reconsider the approach as it would impact disproportionately on members of our Gypsy and Traveller communities. In these exchanges we have highlighted that Gypsies and Travellers are an ethnic minority who have been part of Welsh life and history for many hundreds of years, and emphasised our deep concerns about the potential existential threat to their culture and way of life. The Welsh Government fundamentally oppose the criminalisation of the Gypsy and Traveller communities, which counters every facet of our Travelling Ahead strategy.

Legislative Consent Memorandum and Motions

26. Across the development and passage of the Act, we have used Legislative Consent Memorandums and Legislative Consent Motions to ensure that the voice of the Senedd is heard on matters that fall within its competence. We laid a [Legislative Consent Memorandum](#) (LCM) on 28 May 2021, which replicated the LCM laid prior to the 2021 Senedd Elections on 22 March. This position was reaffirmed in further LCMs, including [Supplementary LCM Number 3](#) which was laid on 20 December 2021.
27. The Senedd debated and voted on the Bill on two occasions, voting on four Motions in total. The first Senedd debate on the Bill took place on 18 January and the second debate took place on 01 March 2022. During the second phase of consideration of final amendments stage of the Bill and because the Senedd had already made its position clear through prior Legislative Consent Motions,

the Minister for Social Justice published a [written statement](#) in April 2022. This statement highlighted once more the votes of the Senedd on the amendments which fall within competence.

28. Minister Malthouse wrote to the Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners of England and Wales on 13 May informing them the Bill received Royal Assent on 28 April and is now an Act. It also stated the Secretary of State will issue statutory guidance on the Unauthorised Encampment measures although no timetable has been provided for this at the time of writing.
29. On 7 June, the Minister for Social Justice issued a further Written Statement to summarise the overall outcomes of the Act, and to outline the approach taken by Welsh Government across the development, passage and future implementation of the Act. This further highlighted our objection to the provisions on Unauthorised Encampments.

Policing in Wales approach to the provisions

30. Although Policing is not devolved to Wales, the Welsh Government works closely with the four police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales. This reflects that policing in Wales takes place in a distinct legislative context, and that policing regularly interfaces with devolved services such as housing, mental health and substance misuse.
31. The Minister for Social Justice meets on a monthly basis with the lead PCC for Wales, currently PCC Dafydd Llywelyn of Dyfed Powys. The Minister for Social Justice also chairs the Policing Partnership Board for Wales on a quarterly basis, with the First Minister chairing one meeting a year. At the most recent meeting on 17 March 2022, the issue of Unauthorised Encampments was discussed.
32. Work is being undertaken to understand in detail the difference that the new measures will make in Wales, current shortcomings in the availability of transit sites for members of the Gypsy Roma Traveller community in Wales and how these could be addressed, and national policing developments in response to the new legislation.

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Agenda Item 5

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

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Evidence to Senedd Local Government and Housing Committee: Housing for Ukraine Refugees

Naomi Alleyne, Director, Social Services and Housing

Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

We are The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); a politically led cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales.

The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive.

Our ultimate goal is to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

We'll achieve our vision by

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce

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- **Welsh local authorities preparedness to welcome Ukrainians under the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.**

All local authorities are involved in supporting people arriving in Wales from Ukraine. As soon as the UK Government announced the Home for Ukraine Scheme (H4U),



with a clear role for local authorities, councils started to have discussions and began to make preparations, based on the limited amount of information that was available at that time. The announcement of Welsh Government's 'super sponsor' scheme added another layer to factor into councils' planning but all authorities were prepared to support people who arrived in Wales fleeing the war in Ukraine.

In addition to the specific roles required of councils (as set out below), work involving councils has included establishing Welcome Centres for those arriving under the Welsh Government's scheme and setting up Arrival Hubs at key transport sites across Wales to provide advice and Support for ongoing travel arrangements and ensuring any emergency needs were identified and addressed.

It has been much more difficult for authorities to prepare or provide support for those arriving under the Family Visa Scheme (FVS) as there is no data or information shared with councils on those arriving in their areas under the FVS. There is no additional funding for councils either for those arriving under the FVS. The WLGA has written to the UK Government highlighting concerns about the differential support that is available for those arriving under the different schemes while recognising that similar support would be beneficial to all.

- **The role of local authorities and the third sector in supporting the operation of the Ukraine settlement schemes.**

There are a range of roles local authorities are undertaking at the local level in ensuring those arriving do so safely and with a warm welcome. Ideally prior to the issuing of visas and people arriving to join a host, councils undertake:

- A property check to ensure proposed accommodation is suitable and safe, meeting the needs of the People due to arrive
- A safeguarding check, arranging for DBS checks of hosts (all adults in the property) to be undertaken, with enhanced DBS where any Guests to arrive include children
- A follow up check post arrival to ensure arrangements are satisfactory and to make contact with guests (also ensuring they are aware of the support available)

Safeguarding in its broadest sense has been a significant concern for councils who have also been engaging with other partners and using local intelligence where appropriate to help inform their decisions.

Local authorities are also expected to provide £200 per person on people's arrival to help with any immediate financial concerns and to aid their settlement so they can buy anything they may need.

The WLGA has been meeting regularly with WCVA and Welsh Government to discuss the support available from the third sector (and to ensure duplication of effort is avoided) and five key areas have now been identified:



- Supporting Welcome Centres
- Safeguarding (women and children particularly)
- Accessing advice and advocacy
- Community activities
- Reconnecting and reuniting families

The WLGA is also working with the local authority third sector lead officers to keep them updated on the work being undertaken and so they can link with their local third sector partners to add value and additional support in helping people settle, learn about how life works in Wales/the UK and to help with integration, helping children access schools and people to access benefits and find jobs, including the provision of informal language support.

- **How the Welsh Government plans to source accommodation and support refugees in the longer-term (once they leave the welcome/reception centres).**

Along with the concern to ensure safeguarding is robust and people are protected from harm, the provision of suitable accommodation, in the short, medium and longer terms, is an equal challenge. Much of the focus of discussions and planning so far have been on the arrangements needed to support the arrival and initial settlement of people, meeting any urgent needs, undertaking assessments and health screening and establishing bank accounts, enrolling children in school for example.

Welsh Government is working with councils to identify and confirm with potential hosts their continued willingness to accommodate people from Ukraine, however, identifying appropriate additional properties for people will prove challenging given the current pressures on housing markets across Wales. Welsh Government has developed a rematching process ([Homes for Ukraine: framework for accommodation | GOV.WALES](#)), the key over-arching principles of which are:

- Local authorities who host Welcome Centres are not responsible for rehousing all Welcome Centre occupants, though we will expect a proportionate share of occupants to remain in the host local authority.
- The Welsh Government is responsible for determining the fair and proportionate 'distribution' of Welcome Centre occupants to local authorities across Wales.
- Local authorities are responsible for 'allocating' housing to individuals and families where placement breakdowns occur; when doing this local authorities must be mindful of the needs of all populations in housing need in their area, particularly those in temporary accommodation.
- Local authorities should consider community cohesion when rehousing people.
- Once people leave a Welcome Centre and arrive in a local authority area, the local authority in question will be responsible for their housing



needs in the same way as for other individuals eligible for homelessness services.

- Local authorities will be responsible for ensuring all hosts have been subject to necessary Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local safeguarding checks and property inspections have taken place in all properties.
- All appropriate 'move-on' options should be considered for anyone whose initial placement (in Welcome Centres or with sponsors) has ended or broken down, including hosting, social housing and private rented sector accommodation.
- There needs to be a level of individual 'preference' taken into consideration, but it should be made clear that this is not the same as choice. Preference will be taken into account where possible, but it may not be possible.

In all schemes, council duties in relation to homelessness apply as they would to any other citizen (Ukrainian visa holders have a right to move and settle anywhere across the UK, so offers of accommodation may not necessarily be taken up).

The impact of responding to the housing needs of people from Ukraine (in short, medium and longer-term) should be noted alongside other housing and homelessness pressures. The number of homeless people in temporary accommodation stood at 7,779 (as at 31st March) and is steadily increasing. This is in part a consequence of the 'everyone in' policy introduced in response to Covid19 and maintained as policy since we have moved into recovery mode with the aim of eradicating homelessness in Wales. Local government has supported this policy however the lack of appropriate properties is a barrier to reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation as approximately 1,200 people become homeless and need emergency accommodation each month. In addition to their target to increase the number of social rented homes in Wales by 20,000 over the course of this administration, Welsh Government has recently announced a funding stream for 2022/23 of up to £60m to support a Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme which aims to increase housing supply capacity to respond rapidly to these multiple housing challenges.

- **The Welsh Government's discussions with the WLGA and Welsh local authorities on the operation of the Ukraine settlement schemes**

There have been regular and ongoing discussions between Welsh Government, WLGA and local authorities in developing and implementing all Ukraine settlement schemes, including the 'super sponsorship' scheme. Councils are working closely with Welsh Government and weekly meetings are held between local government officers, WLGA, WSMP and Welsh Government officials where regular updates are given and issues and concerns can be aired, experiences shared to help problem solving on individual situations and to help inform the development and review of policy and practice.



In terms of other support for councils, WSMP also convene weekly meetings of councils, health and Welsh Government as a forum to support the work in Welcome Centres. The WLGA are working closely with local authority third sector leads, to help coordinate voluntary and community groups support locally; and the Local Government Digital Team are working closely with Welsh Government and councils in developing a Case Management System that would better manage the information and sharing of data, as well as assisting in the financial information required for claims of funding to be made by councils.

- **The cost of providing support and services to Ukrainians arriving in Wales and how these costs will be met.**

Funding for local authorities will be received from both the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (the £350 per month thank you payment for hosts which councils will administer locally) and from Welsh Government (the £10,500 tariff; the funding for education; and any additional payments to hosts of guests who arrived through the super-sponsorship route).

It is difficult to assess at this time the actual costs of providing support and services to Ukrainians as it is relatively early in the process. It is of concern however that there is no funding available or expectations of councils in providing support to those arriving under the FVS, even though people will need to access support and public services similar to those arriving under the other sponsorship routes.

- **The level of funding provided by the UK and Welsh Governments to support local authorities in supporting Ukrainians.**

Councils have not yet received full written detail or Funding Instructions on the funding to be received, but based on discussions and available information the following is understood (but note funding only applies to the H4U and Welsh Government's scheme):

- A tariff of £10,500 per person arriving in a council area
- Funding on a per pupil basis for the 3 phases of education at the following annual rates: Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000; Primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580; Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755. These tariffs include support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- £350 per month payments to hosts (once guests have arrived) for up to a year and administered via local authorities.
- £200 emergency payment on arrival

Additional funding is provided to some councils to cover costs of providing Welcome Centres and Arrivals Hubs. It should also be noted that funding has been confirmed only for a year, and it is not yet known what funding will be available in future years.



- **Issues and pressures resulting from other refugee resettlement schemes and whether lessons/best practice can be shared.**

The support being provided to those fleeing Ukraine and the likely impacts on councils and public services cannot be seen in isolation to other support councils provide to other migrants. There are a number of other asylum and refugee programmes and schemes that also require the active participation of local authorities, some of which have recently been amended by the Home Office and involvement has moved from voluntary to mandatory. These include:

- The **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)** and the **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)** for both interpreters and other Afghan citizens who met the criteria. To date, under both schemes, 327 people have been resettled across Wales. However, approximately 12,000 refugees remain in hotels (with 390 people accommodated in hotels in Wales) while longer-term accommodation can be found (which includes larger housing due to family sizes).
- The **Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)** which has accommodated 902 people across Wales. The original SVPRS evolved into a wider scheme UK Resettlement Scheme which was open to people also from the Middle East and North Africa.
- In November 2021, the Home Office mandated involvement of all councils the **National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)**. This means that all councils will be required to accept the transfer of UASC to their care on a rota basis (for Wales, this means 30 UASC are transferred to Welsh councils on each run of the rota). Since the revised NTS was launched in July 2021, over 42 children and young people have been transferred to the care of Welsh councils as children looked after (in addition to any children that arrive spontaneously within a council area).
- The Home Office wrote to Leaders in April to inform councils that they were moving to a policy of **full asylum dispersal**, in short, that they now require all council areas be involved in asylum dispersal and accommodating asylum seekers while their claims for asylum are considered. How this would operate in Wales is currently being considered, and the Home Office are also consulting councils on how best this policy is implemented.

The WLGA, along with WSMP is supporting councils in all these areas of work and links well with the LGA in keeping abreast of any new developments. While not without challenges, and the need to monitor local impacts, including community cohesion, the Welsh Government is keen that Welsh local government plays its part in meeting international and humanitarian legislation and obligations on the UK and



works closely with the WLGA, WSMP and councils in ensuring good quality services and support is provided for refugees and asylum seekers who arrive in Wales.

Submission from Oasis Cardiff.

Currently Oasis Cardiff is supporting Cardiff Council with the Ukrainian Welcome centre. We are providing informal English language classes and supporting integration. Currently there are approximately 25 learners. As well as this, many families have been coming to our centre in Cardiff for additional support, signposting and accessing our English language classes. We have over 20 families that are accessing the centre and services.

From our 14 years of experience working in the sector, we would encourage WG to develop consistent taskforce groups that enable the third sector and statutory partners to work together in meeting the needs of the Ukrainian situation. It is vital that the information that is collected can be quickly disseminated and actions assigned, in order to make the system more efficient and effective. I would observe the seismic work that was undertaken in response to Penally, where there were significant levels of collaboration through multi agency channels to engage with those in Penally and which resulted in individuals not getting lost in the midst of the situation. Oasis Cardiff were involved in providing activities and support in Penally, and would be able to share best practice and lessons learned from the experience.

Just in Cardiff alone there are an additional 200 plus asylum seekers staying in contingency accommodation, who at some point will be moved into dispersed accommodation. The increasing pressures on the statutory and third sector organisations means that any further additions to the resettlement process needs to be supported with additional funding measures, and better signposting.

Vicarious Trauma is a concern for professionals that work in this sector, as they address and provide support to those seeking sanctuary. For families that are hosting under the Ukrainian scheme, a recommendation of some talk therapy may be needed, as well as for those being hosted.

Ultimately there is a wider concern about the disparity between how sanctuary seekers from the Ukraine are being treated differently to those from other countries such as Sudan or Iran. Many, if not all, of the people that come to the UK are facing war and yet the visa situation, the call for hosting, and the instant access to state

support increases the levels of inequality, de-skills and demotivates those that are not Ukrainian.



Brief written submission on the topic of housing Ukrainian refugees

FAO: Local Government and Housing Committee
14/06/2022

[Wales Council for Voluntary Action](#) (WCVA) is the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector in Wales. Our purpose is to enable voluntary organisations to make a bigger difference together.

In this response we have focussed on the questions most closely aligned with our work and where WCVA evidence would provide a unique perspective.

- **The role of local authorities and the third sector in supporting the operation of the Ukraine settlement schemes.**

Voluntary organisations and volunteers are present at nearly every stage of the way for Ukrainians arriving in Wales – helping them organise travel to the UK, greeting them at welcome centres, inviting them to their homes, providing counselling, practical guidance and support, making them a part of their local communities. For some arrivals, a volunteer they've connected with initially becomes a constant and reassuring presence in their life, which can be especially valuable in cases where individuals end up moving across county lines and in transition periods, such as between welcome centres and more permanent accommodation.

The third sector works collaboratively with Welsh Government and local authorities to support the settlement schemes. Our sector provides a plethora of both general guidance and specialised services, such as language support,

social opportunities, banking, travel, schooling, benefits, immigration advice, mental health, disability, children's and women's services, among many others. The sector compliments statutory bodies' support by offering tailored advice and solutions to individuals, disseminating information, as well as, in many occasions brokering a link with the local community.

Alongside long-established national and regional organisations, many purpose-driven civil society groups have formed and now collect donations, provide practical advice and link with new arrivals in their communities. As we have seen throughout the pandemic, the speed and effectiveness of local voluntary action makes it a crucial part of the nation's response to any crisis and we anticipate local groups will be instrumental in the continuous support and integration of Ukrainian refugees into Welsh society. Aside from the practical benefit of the help offered, those informal or semi-formal volunteering groups provide an opportunity for local people to take action and feel less helpless in the face of tragedy, whilst enabling genuine social connection between them and the refugees, in line with the Wales of Cohesive Communities goals. The formal voluntary sector often supports those groups by offering practical advice, training, and linking them with statutory services.

The sector also acts as a source of specialist advice to Government, via consultations and meetings, most notably through the Ukraine Third Sector Support group. The group meets weekly and has recently identified five main workstreams – welcome centre support, safeguarding women and children, access to advice and advocacy, community action, and connecting and reuniting families. WCVA welcomes this collaborative approach to designing a synched-in, comprehensive support system. It is important to note that the sector's ability to engage in those discussions is limited by the high demand for delivering services and with no additional funding to increase capacity, many organisations are not able to engage strategically as much, or as often, as they would like and would be useful.

- **The cost of providing support and services to Ukrainians arriving in Wales and how these costs will be met.**

It is difficult to assess the costs of providing support to Ukrainian refugees long-term at this early stage.

Many voluntary sector organisations have expanded existing services they offer to accommodate the needs of arriving Ukrainian refugees, e.g. translation of resources, hiring Ukrainian-speaking staff, specialised training. These extra costs are largely absorbed by the charities themselves.

The Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund is a source of small amount of funding for some, but not all organisations would be able to benefit from it and for others it will not cover all their costs.

It is important to note the sector is under a lot of pressure still dealing with the aftermath of a global pandemic deepening existing inequalities in society, the rising costs of living and inflation. The demand for the sector's services is only increasing while the emergency funding from the pandemic is running out and charitable giving is projected to decrease. In addition, the lack of funding allocation to local councils to support individuals arriving through the Family Visa Scheme is a source of concern as this will likely further increase the pressure on our sector and we are not best placed to provide the primary support to those individuals. There is a real worry in the sector in regards to future capacity.

Strategic investments would help alleviate some of that pressure and enable organisations to co-ordinate their approach in working partnerships to deliver better outcomes. Underfunding often results in unintentional silo working when there is insufficient staff resource to form, co-ordinate and maintain collaborative projects with others.

- **Issues and pressures resulting from other refugee resettlement schemes and whether lessons/best practice can be shared.**

The voluntary sector still offers support to individuals who have arrived through the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, the UK Resettlement Scheme, and asylum-seekers who have arrived through other routes. While the whole sector is under pressure, specialist organisations providing support and advice to refugees and asylum seekers in particular are in urgent need of funding to expand their capacity and continue offering services to all refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Wales.

WCVA supports the Welsh Refugee Coalition in their call to ensure all

refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Wales are supported to the best of our ability, as a true commitment to Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary.

Agenda Item 7

Local Government and Housing Committee

22 June 2022 – papers to note cover sheet

Paper no.	Issue	From	Action point
Paper 5	Housing Ukrainian refugees	The Minister for Social Justice	To note

Agenda Item 7.1

John Hutt MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref MA/JH-/2025/22

John Griffiths MS
Chair
Local Government and Housing Committee
Senedd Cymru

seneddhousing@senedd.wales

14 June 2022

Dear John

Thank you for the Local Government and Housing Committee's letter of 26 May 2022. I welcome your consideration of our ongoing work to support the needs of people from Ukraine arriving in Wales.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme, under which people from Wales have very generously acted as individual sponsors and which the Welsh Government is currently acting as a super-sponsor, has been designed by the UK Government. It has set the visa arrangements for people coming to the UK; the requirement for checks to be carried out on accommodation and the funding rates available to both local authorities and individuals acting as sponsors.

The Welsh Government has supported the Homes for Ukraine scheme – and acted as a super-sponsor – because we are a Nation of Sanctuary and want to support people from Ukraine, often women and children, fleeing the war. To date, more than 5,500 visas have been issued for people to come to Wales and more than 2,100 people from Ukraine have arrived in Wales via the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

The Welsh Government is working closely with local government, the NHS, the third sector and others to provide a supportive and welcoming environment for as many people from Ukraine as possible. The Homes for Ukraine scheme is not a perfect scheme but we are doing what we can within it to uphold our Nation of Sanctuary ambition.

Due to the design of the scheme, we cannot ensure that home visits are always undertaken in advance of people from Ukraine joining their individual Homes for Ukraine sponsor. The UK Government scheme enables sponsors and Ukrainians to match, without Welsh public authorities being notified. We only become aware of a match when a visa application is

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

completed. Due to the scale of the applications coming forward, in some cases home visits will have to be undertaken shortly after Ukrainians arrive. Local authorities are working very hard to complete these checks as quickly as possible.

We have designed our super sponsor route so inspections and safeguarding checks can take place before people from Ukraine move on from initial accommodation and our Welcome Centres to next stage accommodation, where that accommodation is a hosting arrangement.

In all cases, hosts will be expected to have passed DBS checks; have had their property inspected to ensure it is of adequate standard and for there to have been a successful visit once the individual or family group from Ukraine has arrived to ensure things are going well.

The guidance for sponsors, which covers these checks is available here: [Homes for Ukraine: guidance for sponsors | GOV.WALES](#) and our safeguarding guidance is available here: [Homes for Ukraine: safeguarding and modern slavery guidance | GOV.WALES](#) This is updated regularly as we, with the other Devolved Governments and UK Government continue to learn from the operation of the scheme.

We meet local authorities several times a week to answer questions, share good practice and address any emerging issues and have produced guidance for local authorities, which is available at: [Homes for Ukraine: guidance for local authorities | GOV.WALES](#)

Local authorities have existing housing, environmental health and social services duties – staff are aware about how to assess property standards and safeguarding risks. Public Protection Wales partnership's Housing Expert Panel has also met regularly to share best practice, discuss and resolve complex situations and encourage consistency of approach. Where local authorities are drawing on support with property or safeguarding checks, they are drawing on capacity in other organisations with relevant expertise, for example Housing Associations. We have asked local authorities to be pragmatic in their approach in making property assessments. We recognise the relative risks given the circumstances which people from Ukrainians may have been exposed to prior to travel to the UK, nevertheless it is important these standards are not watered down in a way which puts anyone at risk.

Through our engagement with local authorities, we have been exploring various ways to address capacity issues as they emerge. There are arrangements in place to support property inspections via Community Housing Cymru and their housing association members and DBS checks via Care Inspectorate Wales. We have also worked with the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service to increase the number of Wales-based Ukrainian-language interpreters who can be drawn on by public bodies. There is still some way to go to ensure these capacity issues are addressed but we continue to work to meet demand.

Local Authorities have well-developed relationships with third sector organisations in their area. Joint working became a strong feature of the response during the pandemic and provides a strong platform for working together to support people from Ukraine. At a national level, my officials hold weekly joint meetings with WLGA and WCVA.

The scale and pace of Ukrainian arrivals into Wales makes it likely that we will face some pressures on public services. We are working closely with local authorities and health boards to identify and resolve these as quickly as possible.

The £10,500 per Homes for Ukraine beneficiary is helpful in ensuring services are available but it is not sufficient to meet all the challenges which will be identified. For example, previous resettlement schemes have provided a separate tariff to cover health costs which

is absent in this case as is funding for language tuition. In addition, arrivals via the Family Visa Scheme are entirely unfunded and this creates unhelpful disparity in the support available. I have repeatedly raised the issue of funding for public services in my regular meetings with Refugee Minister Lord Harrington.

We have no certainty that the UK Government will extend funding into years two or three of the Ukrainian visas in the same manner as Afghan arrivals have been supported – all Ukrainians arriving under the Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Scheme have been given visas to stay in the UK for up to three years once they complete the necessary biometric checks. If this funding is not forthcoming, it will place an additional pressure on our budgets to provide all the support services we want to put in place.

The Welsh Government continues to make substantial funding available from our budgets to support people from Ukraine. This includes the cost of initial accommodation and wraparound support for people arriving through the Welsh Government Super Sponsor route and the cost of the Contact Centre. Both of these are critical components of our ability to properly support people. With our local authorities and other partners, we have taken on a very significant delivery responsibility which is novel, complex and unpredictable.

We are currently exploring options to provide advice and advocacy services to Ukrainians who have arrived in Wales, including a pan-Wales peer support forum and casework support. Additionally, we are aiming to provide some wraparound support to families who have been reunited under the Ukraine Family Scheme despite the lack of UK Treasury funding. I hope to be able to provide additional details about these schemes shortly.

The UK Government Homes for Ukraine scheme asks for a minimum commitment from sponsors of six months but placements may be longer. However, we recognise that many hosts will not have done anything like this before and may not know the person they are accommodating, which increases the risk that placements could break down.

To address this, we are working with the third sector to put in place information sessions, training and peer support sessions for those acting as hosts in Wales. Our aim will be to support hosts to address the challenges they are facing, to improve the quality of support which Ukrainians receive and to minimise the number of placements which end in sudden homelessness as things break down.

We have recently written to all Wales-based households who expressed an interest in supporting people from Ukraine but who do not yet have a match. We have asked if they were still interested in supporting someone and have passed on details of all those who have maintained an interest to the relevant local authorities. Checks are being undertaken on these potential hosts and they will form an important component of accommodation for either those whose initial placements have broken down or for people who have been initially accommodated in Welcome Centres.

We are committed to helping everyone who needs support across Wales. We are investing over £197m this year alone in homelessness and housing support services and a record £310m in social housing. We remain committed to providing more social homes in Wales as demonstrated by our commitment to deliver 20,000 new low carbon homes for rent in the social sector. The pressures in housing services are a key consideration in the response to the Ukraine crisis and a considerable amount of work is underway to increase medium and long-term accommodation to both assist in the Ukraine response and to respond to the wider pressures in temporary accommodation provision.

In addition, we are building capacity in the housing sector to ensure placements can be made in social housing or the private rented sector. These will be balanced with the needs of other groups also looking to move out of temporary accommodation in line with our Nation of Sanctuary approach and in recognition of the significant pressure of housing services. We are channelling accommodation offers through local authorities to enable them to balance and prioritise local needs of all groups. We are using capital funding to enable accommodation to be brought forward and are clear the capacity this creates should be used by local authorities as they judge best to meet the needs of the range of groups requiring accommodation in their area. We rapidly deployed the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme and have already approved circa £8 million of investment for Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to bring 280 properties into use in the coming months, which otherwise would not have been available.

The £350 per month 'thank you' payments are made by UK Government to Homes for Ukraine hosts. The payment is intended to cover the costs of accommodating individuals from Ukraine. At present, the UK Government has not committed to any funding beyond the first 12 months of a sponsorship arrangement. We are planning to provide 'thank you' payments to people who help local authorities to accommodate Ukrainians who came to Wales through the Ukraine Family Scheme but whose accommodation offer has fallen through.

The Welsh Government is currently providing free train travel on Transport for Wales services for all refugees. The majority of bus operators have joined Welsh Government's Welcome Ticket scheme offering refugees free bus travel. We are currently reviewing the initial schemes (which were for 6 months) to consider how best to support people living in Wales.

Throughout the pandemic we saw the importance and power of effective working relationships between the public, private and third sector. We are building on these relationships by continuing to work with the third sector to identify and coordinate support for Ukrainians and hosts across Wales. I convene a Third Sector Support Group which is an invaluable forum for sharing intelligence, opportunities and building capacity to support people across Wales.

The £10,500 funding per person tariff and additional education funding will be used to support arrivals. There are additional sources of support beyond this. This includes, for example, Community Foundation Wales' Nation of Sanctuary Croeso Fund, which the Welsh Government made a £1m donation to, as well as other grant funders' support in Wales. Many funders, third sector organisations, community groups and activists are already providing crucial support.

Local Authorities have responded swiftly and very effectively to support people from Ukraine arriving in Wales and it has been a very close partnership with them and Welsh Government. Specialist resettlement and housing teams are generally leading on the response and their resources are under strain given both the scale and novel features of the Homes for Ukraine model. Some local authorities have been able to use existing refugee resettlement support contracts to quickly put in place casework support functions in their area, often using the third sector. In some places it has been necessary to recruit additional staff and create additional capacity.

We are exploring arrangements for emergency short term placements where hosted placements breakdown. We will consider the potential for respite placements as part of this work.

Due to the broad range of issues, we have been addressing in recent weeks and the need to prioritise efforts on reducing barriers to entry and ensuring initial accommodation placements are safe and available, we have had to take a staged approach to second-line support functions. However, I hope this response will provide reassurance that many of these services are in train and are due to be finalised shortly.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first name.

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice