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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 few letters.

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