

Information

for County Councillors

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From:	Lisa Westlake, Health Promotion Manager - Resettlement
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Relevant SLT Director and sign-off date:	Trudi Grant, Director of Public Health
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Date:	21/04/22
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To:	All County Councillors
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Update on Homes for Ukraine scheme in Somerset

Since our previous update there has been a fantastic response from the Somerset community with over 350 sponsors now matched to Ukrainian guests as part of the Homes for Ukraine programme. Ukrainian families have already started arriving in Somerset and there is a great deal of work happening across the multi-agency group to carry out checks and provide support for both sponsors and guests.

Somerset County Council's role is to ensure important local checks are completed and sponsors and guests are connected to local services and support networks.

In Phase 1 of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, sponsors can offer a room in their home or self-contained accommodation to a Ukrainian guest(s). They are asked to provide the accommodation for a minimum of 6 months. There is guidance about the types of consideration that sponsors should make when offering their homes, which can be found here under Point 3: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance>. Sponsors are responsible for matching with their Ukrainian guests. This could be through a pre-existing connection or sponsors can ask for assistance to match with guests through a charitable organisation like Reset: <https://www.homesforukraine.org.uk/>. Local authorities are unable to provide matching services.

Once a sponsor has been matched through the national process, they will be contacted by Somerset County Council and encouraged to fill in the webform at www.somerset.gov.uk/ukraine.

Homes for Ukraine has led to a multi-agency response being set up in Somerset to ensure that people can arrive and settle safely. This response involves 7 workstreams who are coordinating the work. These workstreams are:

- children and education
- communications
- health and social care
- community support for sponsors and guests
- benefits, finance and payments
- accommodation
- information, intelligence & governance

As a part of these workstreams, processes have been set up to carry out property checks for all sponsor households, DBS checks on all sponsor household members aged 16 and over, and welfare and health checks after guests arrive. This includes the organisation of the £200 per person subsistence payment which will be issued at, or soon after, the welfare check. Sponsors will be contacted by the Welfare Check team to arrange the welfare visit.

Sponsors will want to be certain that they are in a secure position to offer a stable home to someone who needs it. Sponsors have the option to receive a monthly payment of £350 for up to 12 months, paid in arrears, for as long as they are hosting a guest(s) and that the accommodation provided is of a suitable standard. These payments will not affect someone's benefits entitlements.

Sponsors will be contacted by those carrying out these local checks and arranging payments. It is important that sponsors notify Somerset's Homes for Ukraine team homesforukraine@somerset.gov.uk once they know their guest's arrival date. This will help the teams carrying out these checks to prioritise their work.

However, it is important to emphasise that our local checks do not impact the speed at which a visa is issued. These visa decisions are made centrally and are subject to checks carried out by the Home Office. We understand there is frustration over the speed of this process and we have raised our own concerns with central Government.

We are working with voluntary and community partners to create a network of welcome hubs across the County to support both sponsors and guests.

This continues to be a fast-moving situation and we regularly update the webpage with useful information about the scheme, for sponsors, and guests here: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/ukraine/homes-for-ukraine-scheme/#Information-about-the-process>

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