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Sheet Number:

2022-27/02

Providing support for County Councillors

for County Councillors

Official - Sensitive

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| From: | Brittney Strange, Public Health Specialist |

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| Relevant SLT Director and sign-off date: | Trudi Grant, Director of Public Health |

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| Date: | 22/07/22 |

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| To: | All County Councillors |

**Homes for Ukraine update**

**Homes for Ukraine workstreams**

We have a multi-agency tactical group, chaired by Matthew Hibbert, Consultant in Public Health at Somerset County Council.

The work is divided in to seven streams:

* Accommodation (Sarah Stillwell, *Sedgemoor District Council*)
* Children & Education (Kate Daunton and Paul Shallcross, *Somerset County Council*)
* Communications (Peter Elliott, *Somerset County Council*)
* Health & Social Care (Sarah Ashe, *Somerset CCG*)
* Support for Sponsors & Guests (Gordon East – CHARIS)
* Finance & Benefits (Mark Antonelli, *Somerset West & Taunton Council*)
* Info & Intelligence (Nicola Dawson, *Somerset County Council*)

**Facts and figures** *(As of 18th July)*

* Expressions of interest: 3,120 – These are sponsors who have ‘expressed an interest’ in participating in the scheme but are not matched to guests. It is the individual sponsor’s role to match with a guest and apply for the scheme.
* Property checks that have been booked/completed: 569
* Completed DBS:
  + Enhanced: 682 initiated, 593 completed
  + Basic: 393 initiated, 285 completed
* Total DBS completed: 878
* Welfare Checks: 979 completed from 418 households (as of 18/07/2022)

**Decision Making**

The Government ask councils to report on 5 areas in relation to guests' placements. A £350 'thank you' payment is then issued, subject to sponsors passing the checks. These are:

1. Residential accommodation exists
2. Accommodation visited and suitable
3. DBS initiated
4. Group arrived in accommodation
5. Safeguarding checks completed

**Number of Sponsors and Guests**

* 667 property offers by sponsors
* 1,096 Ukrainian groups
* 1,797 total Ukrainian guests matched to sponsors
* 1,038 Ukrainian arrivals to date

**Current Issues**

Whilst we have successfully recruited some posts, many of our staff have been seconded to support the Home for Ukraine programme. As it is a very fast-paced and challenging project, with elements such as recruitment and complex cases taking a lot of time to resolve, this adds pressure to the team.

Additionally, we receive high levels of casework queries through to the HomesforUkraine inbox from sponsors with a range of queries. Much of the information required is available on the website, so we are working with our Communications team to ensure the website content is easy to find and understand.

**Ongoing cases of concern**

Since the scheme has begun, a small percentage of placements have broken down. Breakdowns can happen for a variety of reasons which can range from cultural differences, a change in sponsor circumstances, differing household expectations between sponsors and guests, and relationship challenges. We are working with Workstream Leads and other partners to circulate a weekly update to sponsors, which will aim to help realistically manage housing expectations and signpost and guide sponsors and guests to preventative support.

**Visa queries**

It is worth noting that the Local Authority does not have information about when visas will be issued. This decision is made centrally by the Home Office. If sponsors have specific questions about visa applications, decisions, or delays, they should contact the UKVI Helpline:

*The Home Office has set up a bespoke helpline for customers needing assistance, who can contact UK Visas & Immigration on:*

*Telephone: + 44 808 164 8810 – select option 1 (0808 164 8810 from inside the UK – select option 1).*

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| For more information please contact: | Name: Brittney Strange  Email: [BStrange@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:BStrange@somerset.gov.uk) or  Name: Livvi Grant  Email: [ogrant@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ogrant@somerset.gov.uk) |