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Sheet Number:

2022-27/13

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: | 19/08/2022 |

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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 16th August)*

* Expressions of interest: 2,728 – 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: 588
* Completed DBS:
  + Enhanced: 746 initiated, 641 completed
  + Basic: 434 initiated, 340 completed
* Total DBS completed: 981
* Welfare Checks: 1113 completed from 484 households (as of 16/08/2022)

**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**

* 720 property offers by sponsors
* 1,166 Ukrainian groups
* 1,891 total Ukrainian guests matched to sponsors
* 1,121 Ukrainian arrivals to date

**Current Issues**

**Transport**

Transport solutions for Ukrainian guests within the County continue to provide a variety of challenges. The HfU team are currently exploring a variety of potential solutions and working with partners in the local districts and the DWP. Once we have a workable solution which address the needs of the majority of guests, we will provide a further update.

**Re-matching**

Whilst our Expressions of Interest (EOI) list is nearly 3000 strong, we are finding it increasingly difficult to find potential hosts. Many hosts circumstances have changed, or they have decided that they do not wish to sponsor a guest after all. The ability to rematch a guest to their current locality (needed for school places or to remain in existing jobs) complicates things and reduces our pool of hosts even further.

The requests for rematching arise from a variety of reasons, and whilst we do our best to help, we do not always have the capacity to assist as we are busy with rematching breakdowns. Sometimes, in certain situations, the solution is for them to find a new host themselves (and there several local support groups and charities who are assisting) or to move into the private rental area.

**6 Month points**

As per the last update, we are continuing to see a trickle of hosts who seem to think that they can hand the guests over to SCC for rehoming after they have hosted them for 6 months. However, we continue to consider various options to support guests, including the possibility of financial help.

**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).*

**Unaccompanied Minors Scheme (UAM)**

Following DHLUC’s opening of the Unaccompanied Minors Scheme (UAM) which allows hosts to host under 18’s to Somerset without their parent/ legal guardian, we have received details from DHLUC of the applications that we have been asked to conduct additional checks on.

To date, we have 2 active applications that we are conducting additional checks upon to make sure that the hosts understand the additional requirement of the UAM scheme. Both applications are some months old and have been on hold until the UAM scheme was released. In both cases the children are not truly ‘unaccompanied’ as they will be living with close relatives (a grandparent and an elder sibling).

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