



**To: Leadership Board**

**On: 22 June 2022**

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**Report by: Chief Executive**

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**Heading: Update on Humanitarian Crisis in Ukraine**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on the local response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, with a specific focus on work being undertaken to support the resettlement of Ukrainian nationals across Renfrewshire's communities, and the ongoing deployment of a Welcome Hub at Glasgow Airport.
- 1.2 Section 3 of the report provides an overview of the work that is being progressed to support community resettlement of Ukrainian nationals through private sponsorship arrangements, including the extensive work programme in place to undertake checks of relevant host sponsor and properties.
- 1.3 Section 4 outlines initial work that has been undertaken in Renfrewshire at the request of the Scottish Government, to establish a Welcome Hub at Glasgow Airport to support any arrivals from Ukraine. This now represents an area of significant activity for the Council which is likely to be required into Autumn 2022.
- 1.4 The paper also provides elected members with an update on recent developments relating to asylum dispersal, with the UK Government indicating that it intends to move to a system of full asylum dispersal across Scotland. This change in approach will have a range of implications for the Council and its partners, and the paper provides an overview of these based on the information currently available at a local level.

1.5 As previously reported to Leadership Board, there are well developed partnership arrangements in place in Renfrewshire to support community resettlement of refugees. These arrangements combined with the experience of council teams, continue to provide a solid foundation upon which to support Ukrainian people coming to Renfrewshire through the various mechanisms.

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## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that members of the Leadership Board:

- Note the contents of this report;
  - Note the establishment of the Welcome Hub at Glasgow Airport
  - Approve the extension of delegated authority to the Chief Executive as detailed in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 and;
  - Note the proposed changes by the UK Government in respect of a national dispersal programme for asylum dispersal and the associated implications within the local authority area.
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## **3. Background**

3.1 It is now estimated that over 15m people have been displaced from their homes and country as a result of the war in Ukraine. As elected members will be aware, there has been significant damage to infrastructure across areas within Ukraine, and this combined with the ongoing dangers of the conflict itself, has led to significant numbers of Ukrainian nationals fleeing the country to seek refuge.

3.2 The UK Government have established a number of schemes by which Ukrainian people can come to the UK to seek support:

- The Ukraine Family Scheme allows family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others to come to or stay in the UK.
- The Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme allows Ukrainian nationals and their family members to come to the UK if they have a named sponsor under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This is largely an independent process whereby Ukrainian nationals have linked themselves to host sponsors through a variety of mechanisms.

3.3 The Scottish Government is a named sponsor under the Home for Ukraine Scheme, under what is commonly referred to as the “Super Sponsor” arrangement.

This means that Ukrainian people can apply to come to Scotland without a sponsor being in place beforehand, and that the Scottish Government will work with local authorities to provide temporary accommodation and support on arrival, and then longer term resettlement.

- 3.4 Under these specific arrangements, Ukrainian nationals and their families receive a visa to live in the UK for a period of up to 3 years, with the ability to work, and to access support such as benefits, housing, health and education.
- 3.5 Sponsors are asked to provide accommodation for a minimum of 6 months, and the UK Government will offer a thank you payment of £350 per month for the first 12 months period of this agreement. Local authorities across the UK will receive funding of £10,500 for each individual that settles within their area through this scheme. The UK Government requires that local authorities undertake accommodation and safeguarding checks in relation to the sponsor and the accommodation, and facilitate the £350 payment as required.
- 3.6 A link to relevant guidance is available here:-

[Super Sponsor Scheme and Homes for Ukraine: guidance for local authorities - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/collections/documents/SSS-Local-Authorities-Guidance.pdf)

### **Accommodation and safeguarding checks for sponsors**

- 3.7 As outlined in 3.5 above, local authorities are required to undertake relevant checks in relation to all private sponsor arrangements as part of the Home for Ukraine scheme. In practice this means undertaking agreed accommodation checks and co-ordinating Disclosure Scotland applications in relation to all adults living within a sponsor property.
- 3.8 As elected members will be aware, thousands of people across Scotland registered their expression of interest to host Ukrainian people through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. In practice a significant number of these expressions of interest have not been progressed, as many potential sponsors have been unsure about how to approach the matching process to a Ukrainian individual or family. Scottish Government have made initial contact with those registering expressions of interest, and have passed the contact details to relevant local authorities for them to establish whether sponsor accommodation can be matched nationally to support Ukrainians arriving through the Super Sponsor scheme. Officers from across the Council have progressed all expressions of interest within the Renfrewshire area. Accommodation and Disclosure Scotland checks are being progressed for any sponsor that wishes to offer host accommodation as part of the Super Sponsor Scheme.

This is a significant process with over 200 properties across the Homes for Ukraine and Super Sponsorship scheme being reviewed in Renfrewshire.

### **Community integration**

- 3.9 Officers from the refugee resettlement team continue to make contact with all known local arrivals of Ukrainian individuals and families and sponsors in the community. The team provide welcome backs and offer support to do things like register for a GP, apply for benefits, and to link to wider services such as employability. They are also working to establish links with community groups and organisations that can provide support and integration opportunities at a local level.

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## **4 Establishment of Welcome Hubs**

- 4.1 As reported to Leadership Board in April 2022, Renfrewshire Council was asked to establish a Welcome Hub at Glasgow Airport to support Ukrainian arrivals to Scotland through this entry point. The purpose of these hubs is to ensure that any Ukrainian individual or family is able to be signposted to relevant information and support if this is required. The initial welcome at the airport is delivered in close partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council. Once arrivals have passed through the initial welcome area staff from the council and partner organisations are providing additional support to those in need.
- 4.2 For people arriving under the super-sponsor arrangement, the Welcome Hub provides temporary accommodation and support, and an initial assessment of need and requirements will be made and passed to the COSLA Migration team to allow matching of the family or individual to offers of accommodation within local authority areas across Scotland.
- 4.3 This has been a significant undertaking for the organisation, and in addition to the steady stream of arrivals at Glasgow Airport itself, the Glasgow Airport hub has also provided additional overflow temporary accommodation to Ukrainian nationals arriving through Edinburgh City. This support was requested by Scottish Government in response to the high volume of arrivals being received through Edinburgh, which has in effect become a national hub for arrivals into Scotland.
- 4.4 Scottish Government have indicated that costs incurred by local authorities hosting welcome hubs will be met, and agreement on the detail of this financial arrangement is currently being progressed by officers through COSLA.
- 4.5 As the pace of community resettlement increases in Renfrewshire, there will be likely be significant additional demand to be managed in terms of facilitating integration, with an ongoing need to support Ukrainian arrivals, hosts and to manage any breakdown in support arrangements. The Welcome Hub therefore presents a very significant additional resourcing requirement over the medium term in Renfrewshire, over and above community integration.

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## **5. Asylum dispersal**

- 5.1 In April 2022 the UK Government notified all UK local authorities of their intention to expand asylum dispersal arrangements. For a number of years, Glasgow City Council has been the only Scottish local authority designated as a dispersal area. Due to increasing numbers of asylum seekers being housed in temporary accommodation (including hotels), all local authorities are now expected to participate in dispersal. An informal consultation will be launched in May 2022 to capture the views of local authorities as to how such a model will work and how to take account of the impact on councils.
- 5.2 The contract for asylum dispersal in Scotland is currently operated by Mears and officers have attended meetings with COSLA, UK Government, Glasgow City Council and Mears to discuss the national proposals further. Information has recently been received through these discussions that asylum dispersal will begin to take place in areas including Renfrewshire, from June 2022. Officers continue to engage with representatives from the Home Office, Mears, the HSCP, Police Scotland and third sector partners to respond to these developments and to any need and support requirements as these arise.
- 5.3 The UK Government has indicated that funding will be made available to support the widening of the asylum dispersal on a short term basis only. The asylum dispersal scheme is very different from resettlement schemes which the Council has participated in previously, and this is a very complex area of activity which services and partners will have to operate within to support vulnerable people as appropriate.

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## **6 Next steps**

- 6.1 Given the level of uncertainty that currently exists in terms of the arrival of Ukrainian arrivals, and the requirement of the local authority to respond at pace to any requests for support, it is recommended that the Chief Executive continues to be authorised to put in place such arrangements and resources as may be required to support both the operation of the Welcome Hub and the resettlement and support of refugees from Ukraine within Renfrewshire. This was previously agreed by Leadership Board in April 2022, but it is recommended that this continues over the Summer recess period.
- 6.2 Further that given the notification from the Home Office of the intention to extend the Asylum dispersal programme to areas beyond Glasgow City including Renfrewshire, that the Chief Executive is authorised to put in place the necessary arrangements to ensure a coordinated partnership response to any implications that may arise from the asylum dispersal programme.

- 6.3 It is intended that regular updates will continue to be provided to all elected members as this emerging situation develops further.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** –. The paper notes the funding that will be allocated to local authorities by the UK Government for each arrival through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Funding arrangements for the Welcome Hubs remain subject to further agreement with the Scottish Government.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – the recommendation in this report supports ‘Our Renfrewshire is fair’ and ‘Our Renfrewshire is safe’ given the potential for addressing inequalities and protecting the vulnerable.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals’ human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council’s website.
8. **Health and Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – COSLA Leaders agreed that local authorities would support those seeking refuge in Scotland through the UK Government schemes, and would work with Scottish Government to ensure support was in place to any Ukrainian arriving through the super sponsor arrangements in place as part of the wider Homes for Ukraine scheme
13. **Climate Risk** – none

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### List of Background Papers:

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