



Homes for Ukraine

Briefing and Lessons Learnt

Performance & Corporate Services Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
17 June 2022

Briefing Approach | Aims and Objectives

This briefing is intended to provide background and context on the Oxfordshire response to the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme and related programmes supporting those impacted by the war in Ukraine. It sets out the local response and reflects on initial lessons learnt.



Details of the scheme



Provide a briefing on the local response so far



Reflect on lessons learnt

Details of the scheme | The national picture

There are two, separate schemes available to Ukraine nationals displaced by the war to obtain visas for residence in the UK.

Homes for Ukraine

- Visas for Ukrainian nationals who don't have family in the UK
- Host family need to be matched to the guest Ukrainians before they can apply for the visa
- UK Government provides a £200 emergency payment to the guests and a £350 monthly 'thank you' payment to the hosts
- Ukrainian guests will have access to public funds

Friends and Family

- Visas for Ukrainian nationals who have close family in the UK
- Ukrainian guests must be 'hosted' in their family home
- UK government does not provide any emergency or thank you payments
- Ukrainian guests will have access to public funds

Local authorities have business-as-usual statutory duties towards everyone within their areas for delivering support services for such as homelessness, access to education and safeguarding. However, local authorities have specific new responsibilities for the administration of aspects of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Details of the scheme | Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for both schemes are split between central and local government:

Central Government

- Home Office organise the visa application system for both the Friends and Family and the Homes for Ukraine schemes
- This includes a Police National Computer check and issuing the permission to travel letters
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities works with partners to create, maintain and update the Homes for Ukraine portal ('Foundry')
- This includes attaching Home Office data into the portal system so that local authorities can see the visa status
- Sets guidance for councils on what local responsibilities and duties

Local Government

- Carry out / coordinate accommodation, safeguarding and DBS checks (Homes for Ukraine)
- Administer funding to host families and Ukrainian guests (Homes for Ukraine)
- Put in place assistance for host families and guests and formal support community integration (Homes for Ukraine)
- Administer additional education funding (Homes for Ukraine)
- Deliver statutory responsibilities including safeguarding, education, homeless support and community development (all schemes)

Oxfordshire Response | Local Roles and Responsibilities

The Oxfordshire partnership response was built on the successful model established in the COVID-19 Community Cell which brought together the interagency response to COVID-19 and led coordination with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). The Community Cell acts as the senior coordinating group, accountable to the Oxfordshire Chief Executive's Group who oversee the strategic response.

County Council

- Manage all funding and Ukraine budgeting needs
- Perform the safeguarding checks from social work teams
- Deliver £200 payments to new guests
- Run Ukraine dedicated helpline and email inbox
- Support with community integration
- Statutory duties

City/Districts

- Perform accommodation checks and report back to county
- Lead on homelessness prevention and advise on how rematching services should function
- Fallback delivery of £200 payments to new guests
- Support with community integration and community liaison officer function
- Lead on local enquiries
- Statutory duties

VCS

- Asylum Welcome (AW) acting as strategic partner to lead on VCS response. AW supports community integration through information giving, signposting, networking and events and coordinating the Community Liaison Officer function.
- Grass routes local VCS support welcome, integration and meeting immediate social and welfare needs
- Early support for translation services

Host Families

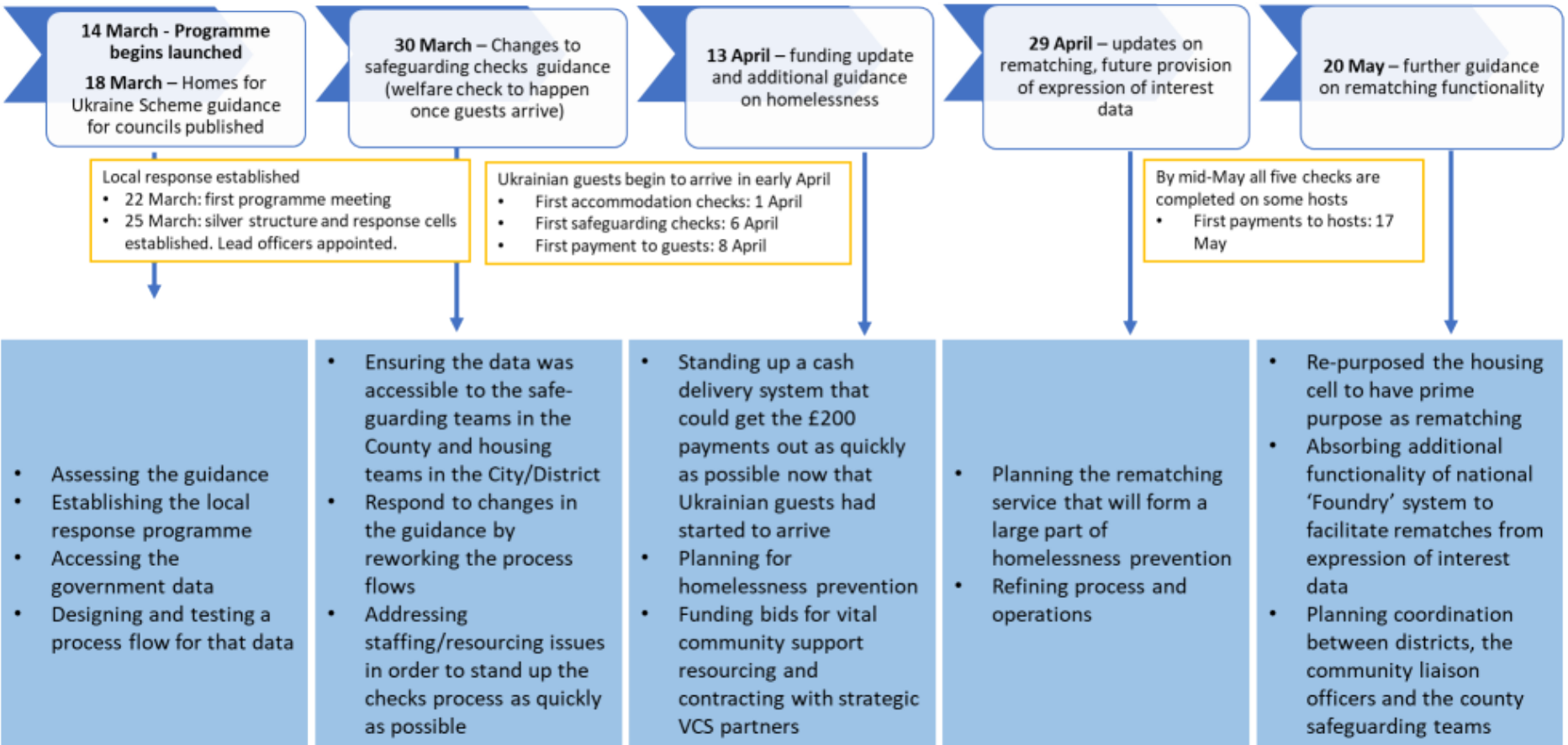
- Offer of accommodation and welcome
- Help their guests adapt to life in the UK, eg to get registered at GP practices, support access to universal credit registration for school places etc
- Support with community integration

The Community Hub is supported by eight operational 'cells' which are responsible for delivering each element of the response (see Annex 1 for details).



Oxfordshire Response | Timeline

National scheme timeline:



Reflections and lessons learnt | What went well

- Building on the COVID-19 response, the multi-agency response was able to stand up quickly, with well rehearsed structures and good relationships already in place
- The County Council's programme management, data management (including the resourcing of a single point of control for data), and customer service functions were essential to meeting the scale of the challenge and leveraged the impact of the city and district community and housing functions
- Joint leadership of the 'Community Hub' by a County Corporate Director and a senior manager from the City and District Councils ensured shared ownership and joint accountability
- Ongoing joint communications and stakeholder engagement have ensured a clear and consistent message to all of those involved and interested in the scheme and helped to maintain confidence during periods of uncertainty
- Early involvement of the Voluntary and Community Sector at the strategic as well as operational levels helped ensure that the critical capabilities of local VCS organisations and county-wide VCS partners were fully utilised

Reflections and lessons learnt | Reflections

- The Ukraine response further evidenced that an ‘urgent needs’ inter-agency response capacity is required for medium to long term ‘rising-tide’ events beyond the time period managed through traditional emergency planning arrangements
- Practical data/systems/technology capabilities have an impact on our joint capacity to response to new events - for example having in place a platform to make payments at scale
- There is an ongoing challenge responding to public expectations where national announcements run ahead of the issuing of guidance and direction. Community engagement and close working with VCS partners helps to maintain confidence and trust through periods of uncertainty.



Annex 1

Governance and Programme Structure

Governance | Overall structure



Gold
Oxon Chief Execs Group

Silver
Joint Community Hub

Silver reps – County, City, Districts, CCG, Oxford Health, Public Health, TVP, Asylum Welcome, OxLEP, LRF

JCH Programme Support

Programme co-ordination

Process activation

Response and re-allocation SOPs

Travel and Logistics

Bronze groups

Data management

DLUHC portal

GDPR

Data flow/Govt reporting

Communications and customers

Website development and updates

Initial contact and support information

Stakeholder comms

Public comms

Customer support contact

Rematching

Rematching process

Liaising with local offers of relief housing

Safeguarding and Accommodation

Accommodation check

Safeguarding visit

DBS checks

Finance

Financial payments and budget management

Financial monitoring and reporting

Education

School/early years placement

Education funding

Ongoing support for schools

Health

Health and wellbeing support / universal plus health services

Immediate health access

GP registration

Community

Community networks and VCS links

Translation support

ESOL for adults

Benefit support

Community integration



Governance | Response cells 2

Silver Joint community hub

Reporting to the Oxon chief executives group, this group provides strategic oversight of the countywide partnership support arrangements.

JCH programme support

This group facilitates the delivery of the support programme for Ukrainian guests and coordinates the interactions between the proposed workstreams below.

Data management

Responsible for DLUCH portal access and sharing of data to district/city leads. Also responsible for: data sharing agreements and ensuring GDPR compliance; process requirements to ensure data flows through to other bronze groups that need it; compliance with formal reporting requirements from HM government; and maintenance of master records in DLUCH portal.

Communications and customers

Development of a range of local introductory and support information for hosts and guests to supplement HM government material including welcome letters, direct and targeted e-newsletter content for hosts and guests, responsible for consistent system comms, website landing page and wider local content for Oxfordshire, customer contact pathway and scripts for queries/support for sponsors and guests.

Rematching and housing

Development of reallocation process protocols and accommodation assistance. There may be some cases where the sponsor/guest relationship breaks down or the relevant checks are not completed satisfactory. This bronze group will determine the system approach to these cases.

Governance | Response cells 2

Safeguarding

Responsible for accommodation checks, safeguarding visits and DBS checks (basic and enhanced) – these can start to be conducted as soon as we are aware that a visa application has been submitted. Councils must make at least one in-person visit either before or shortly after a guest has arrived, to confirm that the accommodation is suitable and the guest is well and that there are no serious safeguarding or welfare concerns.

Finance

Responsible for determining the arrangements for all Ukraine response related financial payments, budget management and any financial monitoring and reporting that is required on a system/council by council basis.

Education

Councils are required to provide school places for children of school age and support for early years. This group is responsible for mapping where sponsors are located against school place availability as soon as data is open to councils, funding for schools and other support that may be required eg translation services.

Health

Responsible for ensuring that councils provide advice and referrals to services as appropriate eg mental health services and other health services. This will include GP registration, mapping of sponsors to GP provision and COVID-19 vaccination status support.

Community

Responsible for benefits and job searching support and community integration. This may include the organisation of community events; the use of community champions and interfaith networks; increasing local authority contact/interaction with Ukrainians; access to translation services; and working with local voluntary sector organisations and faith groups to help signpost advice and support. Also responsible for transport.