

# Report

Report to:	<b>Employee Issues Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>30 August 2022</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Homes for Ukraine Scheme</b>
----------	---------------------------------

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:-

- ♦ advise the Employee Issues Forum of the support and assistance being provided to Ukrainian refugees by employees within Housing and Technical Resources, working with internal and external partners

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 The Employee Issues Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s): -

- (1) that the work being undertaken by Housing and Technical Resources employees, working closely with internal and external partners, in support of Ukrainian refugees be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the United Kingdom Government announced a 'Homes for Ukraine' Scheme. Phase one of the scheme was launched on 18 March 2022, to enable Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war to apply for a visa to live in the UK, where they have a named person willing to sponsor them and provide a home or room(s) within their home.
- 3.2 At the same time, the Scottish Government launched the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme, which operates within the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The Super Sponsor scheme provides an alternative route for Ukrainian nationals to apply for a visa, without the need for a named sponsor to be identified before they are given permission to travel to the UK.
- 3.3 The Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme offers Ukrainian nationals temporary accommodation on their arrival to Scotland through Welcome Hubs and provides a matching service to secure accommodation which has been checked by local authorities to ensure that it is safe and meets required standards.
- 3.4 It was initially anticipated that the Scottish Super Sponsor scheme would support around 3,000 Ukrainian nationals to settle in Scotland, however since the scheme was launched, over 10,000 people have arrived in Scotland. Indeed, including the Homes for Ukraine scheme, there are now more than 13,000 Ukrainian nationals in Scotland.

#### **4. Previous Experience of Refugee Resettlement in South Lanarkshire**

- 4.1 Housing and Technical Resources employees, working closely with Community Planning Partners, have been actively involved in supporting refugees since 2015, when the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme (SRRP) was introduced, with the aim of settling 20,000 refugees in the United Kingdom over a five-year period.
- 4.2 The Refugee Resettlement Team was established to provide dedicated and specialist support to help Syrian nationals to integrate into their new home, community and the Scottish way of life. Since 2015, the Refugee Resettlement Team has supported 57 Syrian families (197 individuals) to settle across South Lanarkshire.
- 4.3 Following on from the success of the SRRP in South Lanarkshire, in 2020, the Council confirmed its commitment to supporting a new Global Resettlement Scheme. This scheme consolidated a number of other refugee schemes, including the SRRP, and since its introduction a further 20 refugees have settled in South Lanarkshire, supported by the Refugee Resettlement Team and Community Planning Partners.

#### **5. Overview of Support Provided to Ukrainian Refugees in South Lanarkshire**

- 5.1 The scale of the Ukrainian refugee crisis is one of the worst seen in modern times. The learning and experience gained in South Lanarkshire through previous resettlement programmes has undoubtedly been invaluable, however the high numbers of Ukrainian nationals, the nature of the support required, and the short timescale (since March 2022) has presented challenges not previously experienced through other resettlement programmes.
- 5.2 **Provision of Temporary Accommodation for Ukrainian Refugees**
- 5.2.1 The first Welcome Hub hotel in South Lanarkshire, managed and directed by Housing and Technical Resources, was established in East Kilbride at the end of April 2022. A total of three hotels located in East Kilbride and one in Hamilton are now operating as Welcome Hubs for those travelling under the Scottish Super Sponsor scheme (152 rooms in total). As of 15 August 2022, there were 445 Ukrainian nationals living within the four hotels, all of which are managed by Housing and Technical Resources.
- 5.2.2 The Welcome Hubs provide safe and secure temporary accommodation with meals for Ukrainian nationals until arrangements can be made for them to:-
- move on to another local authority area; or
  - move on to suitable interim accommodation; or
  - be matched to a suitable host and arrangements made to move into the host accommodation; or
  - be allocated a council or Housing Association property; or
  - secure a property in the private rented sector
- 5.2.3 In addition to managing their existing resettlement caseload, the Refugee Resettlement Team currently work across all four hotels providing a range of resettlement support and assistance to Ukrainian nationals. Further details on the nature of the support provided is detailed in 5.4 below.

### **5.3 Permanent Accommodation Provided to Ukrainian Refugees**

5.3.1 Over the course of the last three months, the council and its Housing Association partners have provided permanent accommodation to 25 Ukrainian families (61 individuals) across South Lanarkshire.

5.3.2 Housing Association partners and Housing and Technical Resources employees working within local housing offices, continue to identify suitable properties for Ukrainian nationals who wish to remain in South Lanarkshire. These employees, work closely with colleagues within Property Services to ensure that properties can be allocated as quickly as possible, allowing people to quickly move on from hotel accommodation.

5.3.3 Discussions are ongoing with colleagues within Estates and Finance and Corporate Resources to consider whether there are other accommodation options to meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees and enable them to move on from the hotels.

5.3.4 Challenges are emerging both nationally and locally in relation to meeting the housing needs and aspirations of Ukrainian nationals. The council will continue to work with the Scottish Government, CoSLA, and partners nationally and locally to address these issues.

### **5.4 Support Provided to Ukrainian Refugees**

5.4.1 The significant challenge of supporting the Homes for Ukraine scheme and Scottish Super Sponsor scheme, would not be possible without the commitment of employees within Housing and Technical Resources, other council Resources and Community Planning Partners.

5.4.2 The Refugee Resettlement Team, which comprises an Adviser, a Co-ordinator and five Support Officers provides a wide range of support to Ukrainian nationals from when they arrival at the Welcome Hubs through to when they secure accommodation. This work includes practical support and general advice and assistance but also specialist resettlement work including:-

- obtaining biometric residence permit
- applying for state benefits, national insurance number
- opening a bank account
- registering with a G.P, dentist
- enrolling children in school (working with colleagues in Education Resources)
- assistance to match to a host
- arrangements for furnishing properties
- arrangements for moving to other local authority areas

5.4.3 The Refugee Resettlement Team is also responsible for carrying out safeguarding checks in relation to Ukrainian nationals who arrive in the country under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and work closely with colleagues in Environmental Services and Personnel Services to ensure that property checks and Disclosure checks are successfully completed, and any issues discussed and, where possible, resolved.

5.4.4 It is recognised that the additional work created by the Homes for Ukraine and Scottish Super Sponsor scheme has presented challenges for the Refugee Resettlement Team and consequently recruitment processes are underway to increase personnel within the team by a further two Support Workers and an Administrative Officer.

5.4.5 In the meantime, other Housing and Technical Resources employees, usually based in local housing offices have shown flexibility and a willingness to assist in any way they can to support the Welcome Hubs and provide practical help to ensure council properties are ready for Ukrainian nationals to occupy as quickly as possible. This teamworking approach within the Resource has helped to settle 25 Ukrainian families into a permanent home in South Lanarkshire within a short timescale.

5.4.6 The health and wellbeing of displaced Ukrainian nationals is a key priority, and the Refugee Resettlement Team also works closely with health professionals from NHS Lanarkshire, located within the hotels, to deal with any physical or mental health-related issues that arise.

5.4.7 The level of support provided to such high numbers of people on both a short and long term basis is clearly a challenge for Housing and Technical Resources and its' partners. As the Ukrainian refugee crisis progresses and develops, it will be important to closely monitor employee resource requirements as they arise.

## **6. Next Steps**

6.1 On 13 July 2022, the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme was temporarily paused for new applications, to allow time to secure accommodation and provide support to the high numbers of Ukrainians already in the country.

6.2. Housing and Technical Resources will continue to actively engage in strategic meetings with the Scottish Government, other local authorities and agencies as appropriate. The current position in relation to the Scottish Super Sponsor scheme will be monitored to ensure that the council and partners can respond appropriately and put effective arrangements in place to continue to support Ukrainian refugees.

## **7. Employee implications**

7.1. Ongoing monitoring of developments in relation to the Ukrainian refugee crisis will continue and any employee resource requirements considered and addressed as appropriate.

## **8. Financial implications**

8.1. There are no current financial implications associated with this report. The UK Government has made available funding to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme and Scottish Super Sponsor scheme.

## **9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

9.1. This report does not currently introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore no strategic environmental assessment is required.

## **10. Other Implications**

10.1. The content of this report will contribute to the evidence to support the requirements of the Annual Assurance Statements.

## **11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 11.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore no impact assessment is required.

**Executive Director  
(Housing and Technical Resources)**

**22 August 2022**

### **Links to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes**

- ◆ We will work to put people first and reduce inequality
- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ Caring, connected, sustainable communities
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent

### **List of Background Papers**

None

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like further information, please contact:-

Linda Pearson, Strategy Co-ordinator, Housing and Technical Resources

E-mail: [linda.pearson@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:linda.pearson@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)