



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

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*Parliamentary Under Secretary of
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***Department for Levelling Up,
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To: all council leaders in England

Copied to local authority Chief Executives in
England and the Local Government
Association

22 December 2022

Dear all,

In March, the United Kingdom took the historic decision to welcome people from Ukraine fleeing the invasion of their homeland. Since then, and thanks to the generosity of the people of the UK, over 100,000 Ukrainian guests are now safe in the United Kingdom having arrived under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. 37,500 more have valid visas and may choose to travel to the United Kingdom if circumstances change. The sheer number of applicants and the number of British families willing to open their homes to those seeking shelter is truly extraordinary.

I would like to extend my thanks for the role you have played in the success of this scheme. Local authorities have worked incredibly hard to overcome many challenges and we are ever grateful for your efforts in helping to provide safety for so many in need. We look forward to continued collaboration in the months ahead. Quite simply, we couldn't have done this without you.

The Government is committed to protecting this route to safety into its second year, but we need to do so in a way that is sustainable considering the wider pressures on public finances. We are therefore setting out a series of updates. These measures taken together are designed to recognise the contribution made by sponsors and councils while also ensuring the sustainability of the programme over the longer term and to provide certainty to all those who are supporting our guests here in the United Kingdom.

DLUHC has announced that the £350 'thank you' payments, will be extended from 12 months to a maximum duration of two years. This means that guests who may not yet be ready to move into independent accommodation, will be able to stay in sponsorship for longer with an existing or a new host.

The Government will also increase the minimum 'thank you' payments for hosts from £350 per month to £500 per month, once a guest has been here in the UK for 12 months. A host will receive the increased thank you payment for any guest who has been in the UK for 12 months, regardless of whether they have been hosting them since arrival, or if it is a rematch that started at a later stage. This additional financial support is aimed at helping existing hosts to continue with their sponsorship, as well as new hosts who come forward to offer a home to a Ukrainian individual or family, including those re-matching with guests already in the country. Some local

authorities are already uprating 'thank you' payments using their own resource, and this is a measure we fully support. Our new package shows our strong desire to recognise the contribution made by sponsors, to help them with the rising cost of living and incentivise further sponsorships and rematching.

Since the Homes for Ukraine scheme launched in March 2022, the Government has committed to providing £1.1 billion to councils through a tariff for each arrival in their area. This funding is available for councils to support Ukrainian guests and their sponsors. Given that some Ukrainian arrivals return to Ukraine, after arriving in the UK, and given the need to manage public finances at a time of significant economic challenge for the UK and the global economy, the Government will reduce the tariff for each local authority for new arrivals from the 1 January 2023. We recognise that this is a difficult decision. Councils will continue to receive the existing year 1 tariff to support those Ukrainians that have already arrived, as previously set out. To give local authorities the flexibility to plan ahead, any remaining tariff funding for 2022/23 can also be rolled over and spent in 2023/24.

From 1 January 2023, councils will receive funding of £5,900 for each new arrival to support guests and their sponsors (in addition to the 'thank you' payments to sponsors). (For eligible minors (children coming to the UK without their parent(s)/legal guardian or who become unaccompanied in the UK), the year 1 tariff will continue at £10,500 for arrivals after 1 January 2023 in recognition of the unique requirements of this cohort.) Local authorities will continue to receive separate funding in 2022-23 for the Ukraine education tariff under the rates and terms previously set out (a per child tariff of £3,000 for early years, £6,580 for primary and £8,755 for secondary and payments calculated on a pro-rata basis); and Ukrainian families will also continue to receive government support on skills training, job centre access and welfare payments. The Department fully recognises the many pressures on local authority budgets and at the Autumn Statement the government announced a further £6.5 billion to be made available for local government to deliver core services over the next two years.

The Government will also provide £150million of new UK-wide funding in the 2023/24 financial year to local authorities and devolved governments to help support Ukrainian guests move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness. Councils will receive the £5,900 tariff in the 2023/24 financial year to support new arrivals in their first 12 months, in addition to receiving this £150m to support guests in 2023/24. Local authorities are best placed to understand the support needed for local communities and as is typically the case for various local authority funding, they will also be able to use this funding to support other people at risk of homelessness. Our ambition is to provide this funding at the start of 2023/24 and it will be allocated between the different parts of the UK relative to their proportion of Ukrainian guests. We will engage closely with councils and devolved governments on how this will be delivered and how it should be spent and will publish further details early in 2023.

DLUHC is also launching a £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund, which will provide capital funding directly to English councils in areas that are facing the most significant housing pressures as a result of recent Ukrainian arrivals. These local authorities are facing housing challenges on the back of their generosity, which unless alleviated will further impact existing housing pressures for local communities in a way which would risk penalising them for their generosity. This fund

will allow them to address the immediate pressures as well as build a sustainable stock of affordable housing for the future. This fund will also be used to provide homes for up to 500 Afghan families currently living in bridging hotels at a significant cost to taxpayers. Whilst helping to fulfil the UK's humanitarian duties to assist those fleeing war, the fund will create a lasting legacy for local communities by providing a new supply of accommodation for councils with which to address local housing and homelessness pressures. My officials will be in contact directly with those local authorities in scope with details on this funding.

More widely, the Government fully recognises the many pressures on local authority budgets. On 12th December we published a Policy Statement on Local Government Finance, which confirmed an average increase of around 9% in Core Spending Power in 2023/24, making available almost £5 billion in additional funding to local authorities.

Priorities for the coming months

We are grateful for the hard work and support of councils in delivering this scheme, and would like to set out Government's priorities in supporting sponsors and guests in the coming months:

- **Long-term sustainable housing.** Supporting guests into secure, safe and sustainable accommodation, including through appropriate private rented sector access schemes, such as support for one-off costs. This also includes supporting the longevity of sponsorship.
- **Welcome, safeguarding and settling in.** Supporting guests (including eligible minors) and sponsors by ensuring they are housed within safe arrangements. Ensuring sponsors are adequately supported, including but not limited to timely payment of thank you payments.
- **Integration and work.** Supporting guests to access economic opportunities in the UK, including work and education, providing them with wraparound integration support, for instance the Government's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision and other interventions aimed at identifying and addressing the needs of guests.

In addition to these priorities, local authorities are asked to maintain accurate records for UK-wide reporting on and tracking guests (including eligible minors) for safeguarding and counter-fraud and error purposes. The responsibility rests with the sponsor to update their council of guest absences of over four weeks. Councils should then pause 'thank you' payments to the sponsor.

Rematching and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) support

We are making changes to support and will simplify the process of connecting guests with new sponsors where they are unable to move into independent living to provide greater flexibility.

We want to ensure that rematches are available to anyone, although we recognise that it may not be possible to find a new host for everyone who needs one. Councils in England will be able to consider the most urgent cases for council-led rematching first. In other cases, guests will be encouraged to use local community groups, faith groups, schools and charities as a first port of call to find new matches themselves, although it will remain necessary for checks to be completed as soon as possible.

Where a guest wants to move in with a new host in another council area, the receiving council can decide whether to prioritise the case for help, or whether a guest would need to find their own rematch host. If the guest does find their own rematch in your area, it will be your responsibility to undertake the necessary checks as soon as possible.

We know that in some cases guests are moving in with sponsors without the necessary checks having taken place, and then subsequently contacting the council. Where this happens, it is the responsibility of the council to recognise this retrospectively as a formal rematch by undertaking the necessary checks as soon as possible. If issues were identified by the checks, or sponsors or guests are unwilling to allow the checks to take place or no longer want to be part of formal sponsorship, they should be informed this is at their own risk and the host will not qualify for the thank you payment. Formalising these rematches is necessary to unlock the thank you payment for the sponsor and ensure the transfer of the relevant tariff funding. Further details on this will be contained in guidance that will be published shortly.

Safeguarding remains essential and councils should make guests aware of how to report any future concerns to their council or the police.

Finding work

Many people on the scheme have found work. This is particularly important for those looking to rent privately, and we have published guidance to support guests to find employment, including information on how to have their professional qualifications recognised in the UK.

Eligible minors

We appreciate the continued efforts of councils to process the safeguarding checks for prospective sponsors of eligible minors and, where necessary, to retrospectively apply these where children are already in the UK without their parent or legal guardian.

We would encourage local authorities to prioritise eligible minor applications and complete all checks, including DBS checks, accommodation checks and the sponsor suitability assessment as soon as possible after receiving parental consent documents, ideally within four – six weeks.

We will continue to keep the financial support on offer for sponsors of eligible minors under review given the scheme is in the early stages of rollout.

Regional support through Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs)

To assist councils with delivery of the programme, we have committed to providing additional funding to strategic migration partnerships (SMPs) for the remainder of 2022/23. We recognise the important role SMPs play in helping councils to coordinate regional, place-based models of delivery as well as ensuring synergy supporting different migration cohorts. This funding will allow SMPs to continue their role working with councils, local service providers and VCS organisations to support guests and hosts in your area.

Guidance available for councils in England

Our guidance on GOV.UK will be updated in accordance with the changes I have set out above.

Close partnership working is essential to ensure continuation and success of the scheme. We plan to run a series of webinars and engagement sessions to support you and your teams in delivery.

The Government will also be writing to guests and sponsors on the scheme shortly, to make them aware of these updates.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your continued efforts to help deliver the Homes for Ukraine scheme and provide support for people from Ukraine.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or your usual contacts.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Felicity Buchan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Felicity Buchan MP

Parliamentary Undersecretary of State with responsibility for Homes for Ukraine