

Approval for additional support to deliver the Homes for Ukraine scheme

Date: 19/01/2023

Report of: Chief Officer – Safer Stronger Communities

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Will the decision be open for call in?

Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?

Yes No

Brief summary

In March 2022 the government set up the Homes for Ukraine scheme for visa applications from Ukrainian applicants who have named people in the UK willing to sponsor them and provide a minimum of 6 months accommodation.

Alongside the generous offer of accommodation sponsors will be making, the government are providing a substantial level of funding to local authorities to enable them to provide much wider support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into our communities

A recent report was approved by The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment to approve creation of four fixed term contract positions to provide operational support to co-ordinate activities and services

New guidance on how to support and manage those who are reaching the end of their initial 6 months homed with sponsors coupled with the current economic picture have the potential to impact the successful delivery of the Local Authority and national pledge.

It is therefore proposed to expand the existing team, to meet increasing demand and mitigate potential risks in service delivery.

Recommendations

- a) To approve the creation of 3 additional posts within the Migration Team to support work on the Homes for Ukraine programme.
- b) To approve budget provision for agency staff to provide administrative support to the Homes for Ukraine programme.

What is this report about?

- 1 The Homes for Ukraine scheme is being delivered by Leeds City Council's Safer Stronger Communities (Migration) team since the launch of the scheme in March 2022.
- 2 The scheme continues to develop, and the council is in a much better position to understand further challenges on the horizon. This is evidenced by ongoing meetings with Migration Yorkshire at a regional level and meetings directly with Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to discuss these challenges and how they might be addressed. These include, as an example, move on from initial accommodation after 6 months, rematching and employability.
- 3 DLUHC have shared guidance on post 6-month arrangements and are advising local authorities to explore rematching guests with new sponsors. This is the preferred option in Leeds due to the lack of suitable accommodation. In addition, the cost of living is also having an impact on hosting decisions. Circumstances can change very quickly, and this puts the team under further pressure.
- 4 Discussions have taken place with Adults and Children Services in relation to welfare visits and agreed that a welfare visit is not required to be carried out by a social worker. However, a welfare visit can be carried out by a competent Leeds City Council officer with experience/training in safeguarding.
- 5 The Homes for Ukraine scheme continues to evolve whilst placing new demands on the team. This can create challenges when the guidance is vague, and time is needed to work in partnership and develop processes. For example, the recent Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) guidance has required much work and discussion to ensure the scheme is delivered effectively.
- 6 Processing new UAMs in partnership with Kinship Team has highlighted the need for additional administrative support.
- 7 To ensure that sufficient resource is available to meet all these demands it is recommended that three temporary posts are created to work on fixed contracts until March 2025 along with a temporary agency post created to support until January 2023.
 - a) PO2 – Migration Project Coordinator x 1
 - b) SO2 – Wellbeing Project Officer x 1
 - c) C1 - Migration Project Assistant x1
 - d) Agency support staff x 1
- 8 The posts will form part of the Migration Team and work under the Migration Team Manager ensuring that all aspects of the coordination effort are fulfilled.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 9 The proposal will have a significant beneficial impact on the sustained delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme within Leeds, ensuring that there is sufficient resource to deal with the co-ordination efforts.
- 10 The proposal will also have significant positive impacts on the staff currently providing this resource, ensuring that they can refocus on other competing priorities and return to a sustainable work life balance, that has been unachievable of since March 2022.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 11 Consideration has been given to staff in relation to Health and Wellbeing and their work life balance.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: n/a

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

12 An equality impact screening document has been completed.

13 Proposal have been shared with HR, finance and union colleagues for feedback. Existing staff supporting the Homes for Ukraine Programme will be consulted.

What are the resource implications?

14 The costs for the three additional posts and agency staff budget are presented in Appendix 2. HfU budget costs – staffing, it is proposed that the posts are funded from the additional funding from the Home Office (£10,500 per person).

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

15 There is considerable pressure on the existing Migration Team to deal with the volume of work associated with the Homes for Ukraine scheme to the extent where existing members of staff are working considerably long hours to meet demand. This will impact on the well-being of those staff members which in turn could impact on the ability to respond to queries in an efficient manner.

16 Without the additional proposed posts, the council will be unable to respond to the increasing workload and fail to adhere to the Homes for Ukraine scheme requirements in a timely manner, ultimately leading to distress for Ukrainian refugees and sponsors, and a likely detrimental impact on the reputation of the council.

17 Risks associated with delivering the requirements of the service have been identified, and the new posts will seek to mitigate these risks through an effective team performance and accountability framework, which will be monitored on a regular basis.

What are the legal implications?

18 The recommendations within this paper are not subject to Call In as they are within the delegated authority of the Director of Communities, Housing & Environments.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

19 It was considered to remain providing co-ordination of operational activities through the existing staff employed on the Homes for Ukraine scheme however it is anticipated that service demand levels will increase significantly as matching and rematching that's place concurrently therefore increasing staffing numbers is the most viable solution.

How will success be measured?

20 Success will be measured by the implementation of a team performance and accountability framework and the subsequent monitoring of the agreed key performance indicators.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

21 Recruitment for the proposed posts will commence immediately following approval. The Head of Community Relation and Cohesion will be the responsible officer for recruitment

Appendices

1. Current and proposed structure layout
2. Budget costs for staffing
3. Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers

- None

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