

CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

16th Meeting, 2022, Session 6

16 June 2022

Crisis in Ukraine

1. The Committee has been considering the humanitarian response in Scotland to the unfolding crisis in Ukraine, including the response of the Scottish Government, third sector, and local authorities. A summary of the evidence heard thus far is included below, and a SPICe briefing attached at **Annexe A**.
2. The Committee agreed to hold a further evidence session on the crisis in Ukraine prior to summer recess. At this meeting, it will take evidence from—
 - Yevhen Mankovskyi, Consul General, Ukrainian Consulate in EdinburghAnd then from—
 - Neil Gray, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine
 - Will Tyler-Greig, Interim Deputy Director, Ukraine Resettlement, Scottish Government
3. This will give the Committee the opportunity to receive an update on and scrutinise the developments that have occurred in this rapidly evolving area over the last eight weeks, including the ongoing resettlement of Ukrainians across Scotland and the operation of the various visa schemes.

**CEEAC Committee Clerks
June 2022**

Crisis in Ukraine: Summary of Evidence

Introduction

1. In response to the unfolding crisis in Ukraine, the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee took evidence over a series of meetings on the humanitarian response in Scotland.
2. On [10th March 2022](#), the Committee began its consideration of the crisis in Ukraine with a private briefing from the Consul General of Ukraine in Scotland, and then heard from the following witnesses—

- Jane Salmonson, Chair, Humanitarian Emergency Fund Panel
- Sue English, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Disasters Emergency Committee
- Madara Hettiarachchi, Director of Programmes and Accountability, Disasters Emergency Committee

and then from—

- Angus Robertson, Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Scottish Government
- Alison Byrne, Director for Equality, Inclusion & Human Rights (Interim), Scottish Government
- Joanna Keating, Head of International Development, Scottish Government

3. On [24th March 2022](#), Members took evidence from—

- Graham O'Neill, Policy Manager, Scottish Refugee Council
- Andy Sirel, Legal Director and Partner, JustRight Scotland
- Marie Hayes, Scotland Director, British Red Cross

followed by—

- Neil Gray, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine, Scottish Government
- Alison Byrne, Director for Equality, Inclusion & Human Rights (Interim), Scottish Government
- John Primrose, Deputy Director of International Relations, Scottish Government

4. On [21st April 2022](#), Members heard from the following panel of witnesses—

- Pat Togher, Assistant Chief Officer, Public Protection and Complex Needs, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership
- Elaine Ritchie, Senior Service Manager, Perth and Kinross Council
- Hazel Chisholm, Housing Policy Officer, Highland Council
- Gayle Findlay, Policy Manager, COSLA

5. The Committee agreed to publish a summary of evidence, which follows below.

Evidence

6. The Committee focused on the provision of humanitarian aid, the visa schemes for displaced Ukrainians to be resettled in Scotland and the rest of the UK, and the role and preparedness of Scottish local authorities in resettlement.

Humanitarian aid

7. The Committee heard from representatives of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), which brings together humanitarian aid charities for major disasters and emergencies, mobilising a rapid response unit to facilitate the ability of the public to donate.
8. The DEC's priority countries were identified as "Ukraine, supporting the internally displaced population and making sure that the people remaining in situ are supported and protected and have their immediate needs met; and the neighbouring, refugee-receiving countries of Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova, ensuring that support such as food, water and shelter is provided to people fleeing the conflict."
9. The Committee was notified that the Scottish Government had allocated £4 million in humanitarian aid – including £2 million to the DEC appeal, £1 million to UNICEF, and a further £1 million split between the British Red Cross and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund – and had further provided around £2.9 million-worth of humanitarian medical equipment to Ukraine¹.
10. Separately, the Scottish Government allocates £1 million per annum to the Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF), which the Committee heard was "created specifically to be able to make a speedy response to emergencies using the collective expertise of eight leading aid agencies in Scotland". The HEF Panel Chair added that it "was the only element of Scottish Government funding to support international aid and development last year that did not get an increase in funding, and obviously we would very much like to see an uplift in the future", noting that "there is untapped potential to raise more funds for another disaster and to manage the funds better".

Visa schemes for Ukrainians

11. The Committee heard that the UK Government had launched two visa schemes to enable Ukrainians to come to the UK². The [Ukraine Family Scheme](#) allows Ukrainians with immediate or extended family settled in the UK to join them once their visa application is accepted, while the [Homes for Ukraine Scheme](#) allows sponsors in the UK to nominate a named Ukrainian individual or family to stay with them in their home or in a separate property. Ukrainians arriving in the UK under

¹ [21032022-letter-from-neil-gray-to-the-convener-on-ukraine.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

² A third visa scheme, the [Ukraine Extension Scheme](#), was announced after the Committee's last evidence session on the Crisis in Ukraine

either scheme will be granted 3 years leave to remain and will be able to work and access public funds³.

12. Several witnesses disagreed with the decision to require visas and noted that this was out-of-step with the approach taken across Europe. JustRight Scotland said that, unlike humanitarian schemes, “the visa schemes are not designed and are not sufficient to deal with a refugee crisis,” and Scottish Refugee Council described the burden that visa requirements have placed on “desperately vulnerable people at their greatest time of need.” The Cabinet Secretary noted the Scottish Government’s preference to “waive visa requirements entirely”.
13. Witnesses discussed the responsibility placed on sponsors through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme of housing vulnerable people who are likely to have complex psychological trauma. JustRight Scotland referred to the scheme as “an outsourcing of responsibility to the British public”, and said that although there is “always a role for a well-funded, thorough sponsor scheme...the international obligations and the moral, ethical and legal obligations are on the state.”

Scottish Government super sponsor scheme

14. As part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Scottish Government has taken on the role of a ‘[super sponsor](#)’. This enables applicants to name the Scottish Government as their sponsor, rather than a named individual, which the Minister said would “short circuit the matching process and enable significant numbers of displaced Ukrainians to come to Scotland without unnecessary delay.” Witnesses expressed support for the super sponsor system, with Scottish Refugee Council saying that “it is grounded in evidence and empathises with the needs of the people”.

Transfer of sponsorship

15. Where there is a breakdown in an individual’s hosting arrangement with their family or sponsor, COSLA told the Committee that the only current alternative is to present as homeless. The Committee heard that the Scottish Government is working with the UK Government to allow the transfer of people into the Scottish super sponsor scheme, although an agreement had not yet been reached. It expressed its desire for a resolution to be reached quickly “so that people are able to move back into the sponsorship scheme whichever route they came in by so they are not being put into the homelessness route”, which it noted was not appropriate “when there is a scheme established and there will be support from local authorities, the third sector and community groups for them.”

Ukrainians in Scotland on work, student, and visitor visas

16. The Committee gave particular consideration to the eligibility criteria for both schemes, and heard, at the time of taking evidence, that some Ukrainians currently in Scotland, including seasonal workers and those on student and visitor visas, would be unable to apply under either scheme or sponsor family members under

³ [2995 \(parliament.scot\)](#)

the Ukrainian Family Scheme, and would have to leave the country before applying for another visa.

17. JustRight Scotland provided examples of Ukrainian seasonal workers receiving legal advice who had been unable to seek alternative employment due to the terms of the seasonal worker scheme, including where visas had been extended to December 2022 but there was not enough work for the rest of the year considering its seasonal nature. It pointed to these groups having no resource to public funds and being “at risk of destitution”.
18. The Committee wrote to the Rt Hon Priti Patel, Secretary of State for the Home Department on [1 April 2022](#) to request urgent consideration of moving Ukrainian seasonal workers in Scotland on to the new visa schemes and supporting their family members. In a response received on [28 April 2022](#), the UK Government outlined that it has provided flexibility for those already in the UK, including visitors, to switch on to the new visa schemes, or to extend their existing visas.
19. On 3 May 2022, the UK Government announced the introduction of a new [Ukraine Extension Scheme](#) which allows Ukrainian nationals (or family members of Ukrainians) with a valid UK visa or who held a valid visa which expired on or after 1 January 2022 to apply for a new visa to continue to live, work and study in the UK. The Extension Scheme visa would be valid for three years and allows holders to access public funds. This new scheme is particularly targeted at Ukrainians in the UK on temporary visas, such as seasonal workers and students.
20. On supporting family members, the UK Government noted in its letter to the Committee that seasonal workers, or those under the Ukraine Extension Scheme, may be eligible to act as an approved sponsor for family members under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, however would need to meet wider sponsor eligibility rules⁴.

Safeguarding, trafficking and exploitation

21. Businesses are unable to offer accommodation or employment under the current visa schemes, and the Committee heard of risks of exploitation and people working for their rent if this route was to be opened. On offers from business to bring over Ukrainians for seasonal work, Highland Council shared concerns of what would happen to the individuals when this work ends in terms of their accommodation and employment. However, on employment more broadly, COSLA noted that “people will have three years’ leave to remain, but their initial accommodation with a host is only for six months...employment is one of the next steps that should be explored.”
22. JustRight Scotland raised that those applying to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme are predominantly women and children and cautioned the need for safeguarding and vetting of sponsors. It further stressed the obligation on Scottish public authorities in protecting, identifying, and supporting victims of trafficking. COSLA told the Committee that “local authorities are experienced at working with refugees”

⁴ [Home Secretary response to Convener on Ukrainian Seasonal Workers | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

and have systems “to support people who have experienced trauma, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.”

Role and preparedness of Scottish local authorities in resettlement

23. The Cabinet Secretary told the Committee of the Scottish Government’s aim to have a “resettlement scheme that has local government and the provision of local services at its heart”.

Matching

24. COSLA has been working with the Scottish Government to establish a centralised matching system for local authority placements through the Scottish super sponsor scheme. COSLA shared that it has a model that has worked well in ensuring that displaced persons or refugees are located in a placement that fits their needs, however that this will need to be scaled up: “the scale of the Ukrainian offer from the Scottish Government is significantly different—we are looking at thousands of arrivals in the next few months, rather than over a couple of years, which is probably the more normal route for refugee resettlement”.

25. The Committee heard that the Scottish super sponsor scheme would use welcome hubs and associated accommodation at ports of entry to triage arrivals, assess emergency needs and other needs including housing. COSLA noted that “the welcome hubs are intended to act as a very short-term stay for people while we gather their information and make the best match for them before they are moved on to properties in local authority areas across Scotland” but that “there are still things to be worked through in relation to their exact role”.

26. Scottish Refugee Council highlighted that the super sponsor system “gives the Scottish Government and local authorities the chance to have a conversation about the number of offers that they have in particular local authority areas, and it enables them to start planning on the basis of the potential supply of accommodation”. The Minister discussed urgent work that was under way to enable the sharing of data from UK Government systems – including visa application systems – to understand as early as possible who will be arriving in Scotland and develop a co-ordinated response.

27. In a written briefing, JustRight Scotland warned that “it will be very difficult for local authorities to measure the need and therefore resource services when it does not know how many people will be arriving in its area”, noting that while the Scottish super sponsor scheme “helps manage this to an extent”, a local authority may receive many more arrivals through the broader Homes for Ukraine Scheme⁵.

Enhanced disclosure and property checks

28. Under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, local authorities are required to undertake enhanced disclosure checks and property checks. Several witnesses referred to the staffing pressures associated with undertaking these checks, including Highland Council which is facing specific challenges in conducting checks on rural properties. Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership described the pace

⁵ [*justright-scotland-written-briefing_march-2022.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](https://www.parliament.scot/journals/just-right-scotland-written-briefing-march-2022.pdf)

of work required to keep up with private arrangements that are already in place with sponsors.

29. The Committee heard that there had been difficulties in local authorities accessing the data on arrivals in a timely enough manner to conduct the necessary checks. COSLA noted that “because the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is a visa-driven system, the Ukrainians can arrive as soon as their visa is issued and the local authorities do not get the data on those cases until the visa is issued.” Highland Council shared experience of having been contacted by hosts to say that their match had already arrived: “the data might arrive on the same day, so we have people in properties that we have not checked. We are not in control of that and have not been able to start the disclosure process. That has been challenging.”
30. Under the Scottish super sponsor scheme, arrivals would not be placed in social housing or other hosting arrangements until all checks have taken place, which COSLA said provides reassurance and mitigates much of the safeguarding concerns it has around the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Housing availability

31. The Committee heard that there was uncertainty around the number of housing offers from sponsors and local authorities. COSLA cited the “immense pressure” facing local authorities from existing homelessness lists and other humanitarian protection schemes: “until demand rises, local authorities will be hesitant to put in properties, because they could use them for something else and then bring another property on at the other end of the scheme...they will not be able to provide the numbers that will be required for the scheme, because we just do not have that number of properties in social housing.”
32. On the provision of temporary housing before moving people in to communities, witnesses reflected that the learning from the Syrian and Afghan resettlement schemes, where many people still remain in hotels, should be that “temporary accommodation is only a very short-term solution” as it “exacerbates trauma”.

Provision of services

33. Several witnesses detailed the importance of providing local services. JustRight Scotland told the Committee that “people can receive the best care in the world in a local authority, but it is really challenging if all their community, and all the language and health services, are in another part of the country” and cautioned that services for refugees may understandably be lacking in those local authorities that have historically resettled low numbers. British Red Cross said that the funding package for local authorities would “need to support areas outwith the central belt, where specialist mental health services and support might already exist” and noted the importance of long-term funding commitments.
34. The Committee heard that there would be an immediate challenge in responding to the health needs of those being resettled from Ukraine. Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership informed the Committee that in Glasgow these immediate needs, including immediate treatment and prescriptions, will be met upon arrival at

the welcome hub accommodation, but that in the longer-term, community integration and connectedness would be key.

35. Witnesses also spoke to the complex trauma that those who have been displaced may be experiencing. Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership acknowledged that PTSD can ‘kick in’ at a later stage after the initial assessment of needs, and that the timing of support is “critical.” JustRight Scotland noted the limited provision of trauma specialist mental health care in Scotland and Scottish Refugee Council urged improvements to the psychological trauma framework to “spread trauma-informed knowledge and build in greater specialist capacity.” COSLA shared that “the Scottish Government has set up specific work around trauma-informed practice... to make sure that those supports have a national reach.”

Funding arrangements

36. The Minister told the Committee that the Scottish Government would be providing £13 million of funding to support local authorities, provide accommodation, and meet longer-term needs, in addition to £10,500 of funding per resettled Ukrainian that the UK Government will provide to local authorities to support sufficient provision of services. A further £1.4 million is to be provided to the Scottish Refugee Council for the expansion of its refugee integration service.
37. However, COSLA voiced concerns that there had not yet been funding instructions issued for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme or Scottish super sponsor scheme, and that there was no funding agreement for the welcome hubs, which presented challenges to local authorities and their partners in planning. It further added that there has been no funding provided for additional healthcare costs and stressed that if health services are not available, local authorities “cannot successfully support people to integrate.”

**CEEAC Committee Clerks
June 2022**

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Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

16th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday, 16 June

Crisis in Ukraine

Background

Immigration and asylum are reserved matters. However, the Scottish Government supports asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland, as set out in its [New Scots refugee integration strategy 2018-2022](#).

As explained by the [House of Commons library](#) (September 2021), resettlement to the UK operates through different schemes, rather than one overarching system. An example of this approach is the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). This scheme was launched on 6 January 2022. The focus of the ACRS is to resettle Afghan nationals and their immediate families who remain in Afghanistan or the region.

Resettlement is the approach the UK Government has taken to supporting Ukrainians in coming to the UK.

The UK Government's resettlement schemes for Ukrainians

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the UK Government launched two visa schemes to enable people fleeing Ukraine to come to the UK:

- the Ukraine Family Scheme and
- the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme.

When the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (previously known as the Homes for Ukraine Scheme) formally launched on 18 March 2022, the Scottish Government confirmed that "a distinct route to accommodation, support and care in Scotland is

now available to people displaced by the invasion of Ukraine”. Accessible through the UK Government’s Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Scottish initiative is known as “the warm Scots welcome” and results from the Scottish Government being recognised as a supersponsor for the scheme.

[According to the UK Government](#), by the end of May 2022, the total number of Ukraine Scheme visa applications received was 143,900. Of these 46,000 were for the Ukraine Family Scheme and 97,900 were for the sponsorship scheme. In total 120,200 visas have been issued. 40,300 under the family scheme and 79,900 under the sponsorship scheme.

SPICe has [published a blog on Welcoming Ukrainians to the United Kingdom](#) which provides more detail on the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

The role of local authorities in supporting Ukrainians

When Ukrainians arrive in Scotland, local authorities are responsible for providing housing and public services and supporting their integration into local communities. The [Scottish Government’s guidance for local authorities](#) sets out the role it expects local authorities to play:

“Local Authority resettlement teams are in place in all 32 areas, and it is anticipated all 32 will be involved in offers to resettle Ukrainians arriving in Scotland.

The matching of Ukrainian arrivals will draw on COSLA’s experience. This is work they have been leading for many years, and local networks are robust. Given potential levels of demand additional partners may support the programme.

Once matched to a specific local authority and home, individuals and families will receive support to integrate into the local area. The first step is for an initial discussion to take place between the individual/family and the LA and their partners to identify immediate and long-term needs. The local authority case worker will then ensure links are made to the relevant services to enable access (e.g. GP, dental, school, benefits advice, employment). Local partnerships are in place to enable this.”

The Scottish Government then set out the timeline and approach for Ukrainians arriving in Scotland:

- Displaced person from Ukraine coming to Scotland under Super Sponsor Scheme arrives at a Scottish airport or ferry terminal and is transported to Welcome Hub
- Initial triage done on arrival to assess for any emergency needs this undertaken by LA and partners

- Initial questionnaire undertaken within Welcome Hub by LA and partners to identify housing and support needs required to house individual/family appropriately.
- Assessment is passed to matching team, who then coordinate with local authorities regarding locations for people to be resettled in.
- Individuals/families are collected from hotel by local authority/third sector organisation and taken to their longer term location.
- Local authority resettlement partnerships work with individual/family to identify and provision/enable immediate and longer term needs. This will see individual/family registered with GP and school, provision of local information on services and area, advice and support to access benefits, receipt of initial financial support if required until benefits are accessed and paid, and advice and support on accessing further/higher education.
- Individual able to access ongoing support through LA and Third Sector as required.

Recent Developments

Since the Committee considered the crisis in the Ukraine, the Scottish Government has announced that [displaced Ukrainian students settling in Scotland will be given access to free tuition and living cost support](#). As a result of the proposal, Ukrainians wishing to embark on a further or higher education course from academic year 2022-23 will be eligible for free tuition and living cost support, providing they have submitted an application to the Homes for Ukraine, Ukraine Family or the Ukraine Extension schemes. In addition, existing Ukrainian students who have previously started courses in Scotland and who are experiencing hardship will be eligible to apply for immediate financial assistance through a newly created £1 million International Students' Emergency Fund.

As the Committee is aware, Ukrainian nationals make up a sizable proportion of those in Scotland on seasonal work visas. The Russian invasion has created uncertainty for these Ukrainians who were in Scotland at the time the invasion took place. Just Right Scotland has been given funding (of £41,000) and responsibility for providing advice and practical support to Ukrainian seasonal horticultural workers in Scotland. [According to the Scottish Government:](#)

“Ukrainian workers play a key role in soft fruit and vegetable production in Scotland, but due to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia they are facing a range of concerns about their work, their homes, and their futures.

The new Worker Support Centre, run by Scottish charity JustRight Scotland, will provide key support to workers on these issues as well as immigration advice to enable them to stay and work in Scotland while returning to Ukraine is still unsafe.

The Centre will serve as a first contact for Ukrainian agricultural workers in Scotland, and will be staffed with former horticultural workers who speak Ukrainian and Russian.”

On 3 June 2022, the Scottish Government announced that [a total of 3,747 displaced Ukrainians with a sponsor location in Scotland](#) have arrived in the UK. The Scottish Government set out the number of visas issues under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (previously the Homes for Ukraine Scheme):

“There have now been almost 10,901 visas issued with a Scottish sponsor via the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, made up of more than 7,642 visas supplied through the Scottish Government’s Super Sponsor Scheme, and a further 3,259 visas issued for matches with an individual sponsor in Scotland.”

On 7 and 8 June, the [Scottish Government Minister with Special Responsibilities for Refugees from Ukraine, Neil Gray visited Poland](#).

Issues for discussion

Based on the issues raised in previous evidence sessions, the Committee may wish to discuss the following issues with the witnesses.

Humanitarian aid

The Committee heard that the Scottish Government has allocated £4 million in humanitarian aid – including £2 million to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal, £1 million to UNICEF, and a further £1 million split between the British Red Cross and to the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund. Around £2.9 million-worth of humanitarian medical equipment to Ukraine was also provided by the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government also operates a Humanitarian Emergency Fund worth £1 million per year though it has not used any of that fund to support the humanitarian emergency in Ukraine.

Members may wish to discuss the following areas with the witnesses:

- The experience of and lessons from the Minister’s visit to Poland last week.
- What more can be done by Scots to support the humanitarian effort in Ukraine and in bordering countries.
- Whether the Scottish Government has plans to provide further funding to support the humanitarian effort in Ukraine and in bordering countries.
- How the Humanitarian Emergency Fund might be used to support the humanitarian effort in Ukraine.

Visa schemes for Ukrainians

A number of witnesses expressed their disagreement with the decision of the UK Government to require visas and noted that this was out-of-step with the approach taken across Europe.

Complementing the UK Government visa schemes, the Scottish Government has taken on the role of a 'super sponsor' within the Homes for Ukraine scheme (this scheme has subsequently been renamed the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme). This enables applicants to name the Scottish Government as their sponsor, rather than a named individual.

A number of issues were raised with the Committee about the operation of the visa schemes and the impact of the Russian invasion on short term visa holders from Ukraine. These issues included:

- There was no opportunity for Ukrainians to switch sponsors under the Sponsorship Scheme.
- That some Ukrainians currently in Scotland, including seasonal workers and those on student and visitor visas, would be unable to apply under either of the UK Government visa schemes or sponsor family members under the Ukrainian Family Scheme, and would have to leave the country before applying for another visa. Subsequently, On 3 May 2022, the UK Government announced the introduction of a new [Ukraine Extension Scheme](#) which allows Ukrainian nationals (or family members of Ukrainians) with a valid UK visa or who held a valid visa which expired on or after 1 January 2022 to apply for a new visa to continue to live, work and study in the UK. The Extension Scheme visa would be valid for three years and allows holders to access public funds. This new scheme is particularly targeted at Ukrainians in the UK on temporary visas, such as seasonal workers and students.
- Concerns about the risks of trafficking and exploitation of some Ukrainians if they were unable to find accommodation or unemployment once arriving in Scotland.

Members may wish to discuss the following areas with the witnesses:

- How the visa schemes are operating and in particular an update on the Scottish Government's role as a supersponsor.
- The discussions that have taken place between the Scottish and UK Government's about the operation of the visa schemes.
- Whether the newly introduced Ukraine Extension Scheme has addressed the challenges faced by Ukrainians already in Scotland on temporary visas such as seasonal workers and students.
- How Ukrainians newly arrived in Scotland are being supported into employment and the other measures being taken to ensure new arrivals are not placed at risk of trafficking and exploitation.

- How the Ukrainian community in Scotland is supporting those Ukrainians who have arrived following the Russian invasion.

Role and preparedness of Scottish local authorities in resettlement

Once Ukrainians arrive in Scotland on the visa schemes, local authorities have responsibility for supporting them by providing housing and public services as appropriate.

The Committee heard evidence about the role of local authorities in welcoming Ukrainians to Scotland. Issues raised included:

- The role of hubs at airports and ports in welcoming Ukrainians to Scotland.
- Whether data held by the UK Government on Ukrainians coming to Scotland - including visa applications - could be shared with Scottish Government and local authorities to understand as early as possible who will be arriving in Scotland and develop a co-ordinated response.
- Under the Scottish super sponsor scheme, arrivals will not be placed in social housing or other hosting arrangements until all disclosure and property checks have taken place, which COSLA said provides reassurance and mitigates much of the safeguarding concerns it has around the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. These checks are resource intensive for local authorities to undertake.
- In relation to the provision of temporary housing before moving Ukrainian visa holders in to communities, witnesses reflected that the learning from the Syrian and Afghan resettlement schemes, where many people still remain in hotels, should be that “temporary accommodation is only a very short-term solution” as it “exacerbates trauma”.
- There was a requirement to ensure that services for newly arrived refugees were available across all local authorities and that those services may be lacking in local authorities which have historically resettled low numbers of refugees.
- The Committee heard that the Scottish Government would be providing £13 million of funding to support local authorities, provide accommodation, and meet longer-term needs, in addition to £10,500 of funding per resettled Ukrainian that the UK Government will provide to local authorities to support sufficient provision of services. A further £1.4 million is to be provided to the Scottish Refugee Council for the expansion of its refugee integration service. However, CoSLA suggested that this funding had not necessarily reached local authorities at that stage.

Members may wish to discuss the following areas with the witnesses:

- How the Scottish Government is continuing to support local authorities both financially and logistically in their work to support Ukrainian refugees.

- How the welcome hubs are operating and what information are they providing to Ukrainians when they arrive in Scotland.
- Whether the Scottish Government and Scottish local authorities now have access to UK Government data on Ukraine refugee arrivals to allow for a more coordinated welcome when they arrive in Scotland.
- In terms of the provision of support to Ukrainians, particularly housing, whether there are lessons from the operation of the Syrian and Afghan resettlement schemes.
- How the Scottish Government is working with local authorities to ensure consistent provision of support to Ukrainian refugees across all Scotland's local authorities.

Iain McIver, Senior Researcher, SPICe Research

8 June 2022

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot