

Hertfordshire Strategic Migration Steering Group (SMSG)

Stakeholder Bulletin

June 2022

Ukraine

Family Visa Scheme

At present, the SMSG does not have sight of any data regarding arrivals to Hertfordshire through the Ukraine Family Visa Scheme.

Homes 4 Ukraine Scheme

The SMSG response continues to capture data on several aspects of the Homes4Ukraine scheme as it is operating within Hertfordshire.

Data

Data current as of June 13th.

Arrivals in county			
	Adult	Child	Total
Broxbourne	11	8	19
Dacorum	101	63	164
East Herts	101	67	168
Hertsmere	58	38	96
North Herts	91	68	159
St Albans	104	89	193
Stevenage	12	5	17
Three Rivers	49	14	63
Watford	20	12	32
Welwyn Hatfield	44	34	78
Total	590	396	989

Sponsors with a match	
Broxbourne	28
Dacorum	133
East Herts	151
Hertsmere	72
North Herts	131
St Albans	169
Stevenage	19
Three Rivers	69
Watford	43
Welwyn Hatfield	68
Total	883

Health

There are no major health issues to report. Though it is expected that there will be tuberculosis screenings in order to avoid any major health risks.

Areas in Development

Payments to Sponsors

Payments to sponsors will be initiated once initial property and safeguarding checks are satisfied.

- The first payment was made by 31st May (to 15 sponsors who have passed all checks).
- The next payment is due by Friday 17th June, for sponsors with guests who arrived in April and May.
- A further payment will run at end of June (31st) which will include anyone who was not part of 1st or 2nd group.
- Payments will then be made on the last day of every month for maximum 12 months.

Rematching

In a letter to Local Authority Chief Executives on the 23rd of May, the DLUHC have made the following statement regarding rematching:

‘Rematching should only be used where it is unviable or unsafe for the sponsorship relationship to continue. Only those who received a visa through the Homes for Ukraine visa route are eligible for rematching, to ensure that those without family links in the UK are prioritised.’

The rematching process is currently being developed. This process will seek to identify a suitable sponsor for Ukrainian guests where a placement has broken down. All checks on the sponsors (property and safeguarding) will need to be completed prior to the match proceeding.

Voluntary and Communities Sector

On Thursday 26th May, we had a voluntary sector conference hosted by Communities 1st. Over 100 people attended. In addition to the well-established voluntary and community sector organisations, many of the local community mutual aid groups attended, that have developed to support their local sponsors and Ukrainians.

Upcoming

The focus for next week is developing the rematching processes. Additionally, progressing to the post office alternative from paypoint vouchers.

Contact

Should you have any feedback or questions relating to the Ukraine support schemes and how they are operating in Hertfordshire, please contact ukrainesupport@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Asylum hotels

At present there are **5** hotels in Hertfordshire supporting around 500 asylum seekers in total. These are:

1. Borehamwood hotel
2. Hemel Hempstead hotel
3. St Albans hotels
4. Markyate hotel
5. Welwyn Garden City hotel

In the previous SMSG bulletin published on 12th May 2022, it was noted that the Home Office was considering an additional asylum hotel in Watford that had been due to go live in June. It has now been decided that the additional hotel will not go ahead.

There continues to be some issues at the hotel in Markyate, with residents unhappy with arrangements at the hotel around sharing rooms.

The Home Office have started the Asylum Dispersal Consultation Survey, intended to invite views on the future design of a long term, sustainable approach for asylum dispersal. The [link](#) to the survey will be open until July 1st. The SMSG will be completing the survey on behalf of Hertfordshire’s migration partners. However, we would also encourage all partners to complete the consultation from their organisational perspective.

Afghan arrivals

Latest housing offers from Districts and Boroughs - Data current as on June 10th.

District/Borough	Housing offer (by family)	Families accommodated
Dacorum Borough Council	4	4
East Herts District Council	4	2
Stevenage Borough Council	3	3
Three Rivers District Council	2	2
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council	3	1
Hertsmere Borough Council	2	1
St Albans City and District Council	3	-
North Herts District Council	2	2
Broxbourne Borough Council	2	-

Watford Borough Council operate a ‘singles only’ scheme and are currently housing 17 single Afghan refugees, with 5 who have moved on, and 12 who are currently in the project.

Latest Headlines

Bridging Hotels

There are 460 Afghan residents currently in Bridging Hotels in Hertfordshire, with a further 25 new arrivals due in the next week.

As of June 1st, the two Hertsmere bridging hotels have now merged and all residents from across both hotels are now residing in one. This move has resolved a range of issues that some residents were experiencing in one of the hotels and improved morale.

Summer Holidays

Herts Sports Partnership is working closely with a range of council and voluntary sector partners to extend the Happy Holiday Activity Programme to all children in the bridging hotels.

Key Issues

Mental Health

There have been recent reports of declining mental health among the Afghan arrivals.

Flourish is the newly commissioned Mental Health service provided by the Mind Hertfordshire Network. It will be open to Hertfordshire guests from across all refugee schemes and clients will be able to contact the service from 1st July. The programme will initially commence with Afghan Bridging hotels and support to Ukrainians.

Service promotion will start on the 1st of July, although the referral form will be available before 20th June and the email inbox is already operational and interest is being registered.

Planning for service mobilisation is well underway, including:

- 4 experienced practitioners have been newly recruited, and the Team Leader is already in place and working on the project. Recruitment is now also going out for a group facilitator.
- A group in Watford for Ukrainians is already up and running and learning from this is being fed into the development of the rest of the service.
- Contact with other partners to build partnerships and referral pathways is taking place, including with HertsHelp, the Refugee Council and PCN Link workers. Meetings with others have also been set up.