

REPORT OF THE INTERIM SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES

TRANSPORT SUPPORT FOR HOMES FOR UKRAINE GUESTS

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve an allocation of funding from the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) budget to extend concessionary bus travel passes provided to guests under the scheme across the County.

Information

2. The HFU scheme, launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, allows individual residents in the UK to sponsor named Ukrainian guests. Guests can live and work in the UK for up to 18 months post arrival (changed from 3 years for new arrivals as of 19 February 2024 when the Government announced these changes) and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support.
3. On 19 February 2024, the Government announced its intention to create a new Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme. UPE will allow Ukrainians who are in the UK on any of the three existing visa schemes to extend their stay by 18 months. Ukrainians will only be able to apply for the UPE scheme when they have 3 months or less remaining on their current visa. UPE will replace their existing visa and constitutes a new scheme that is separate to HFU.
4. As of May 2024, full details regarding UPE are yet to be determined. There has been no announcement as to how the UPE scheme will be administered or any associated support for those granted a UPE visa. There are no known financial impacts for the Council relating to the newly announced UPE scheme.
5. The number of eligible people who can access the HFU scheme is unlimited and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward. Based on Government data as of May 2024, Nottinghamshire County Council is set to support 1,814 guest visa applications, with 1,307 arrivals to date.
6. Current records indicate that as of May 2024, 425 Ukrainian guests are still living with 242 sponsors. Eighty percent of sponsors have hosted guests for 6 months or longer. Fifty-nine percent have hosted for 12 months or longer. Sponsors under the scheme are only expected to host for 6 months and the strain placed upon them by hosting can be significant.
7. Many hosting arrangements are in rural areas of the County. These arrangements come with an increased risk of isolation, alongside a lack of employment and education opportunities for guests. Limitations upon travel and independence amongst guests puts significant pressure on existing hosts, potentially resulting in increased strain on current sponsorship arrangements.

8. During the period of their visa, many guests are required to relocate between host households or into other accommodation such as social housing. This results in longer travel distances between guest households and established employment and education opportunities, alongside other key services such as healthcare.
9. The Homes for Ukraine Steering Group has identified a growing rate of employment among guests and a steady commitment towards attending language classes. Transport support is a key enabler in allowing guests to access these opportunities whilst reducing the risk of sponsorship breakdown.

Existing Transport Support for Guests

10. In July 2022, following feedback from hosts and guests, all guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme within the County were issued with concessionary bus travel passes. The passes enable guests to access free bus travel across Nottinghamshire, Nottingham City, Derbyshire, and Derby City, for work, school, leisure, or other purposes.
11. As per the Cabinet Member for Communities' approval on 21 January 2023, and in conjunction with Derbyshire County Council, concessionary bus pass support was extended for 6 months. This support was subsequently extended twice, with a current expiry date of 31 July 2024.
12. Data provided by the Council's Transport and Travel Services on the use of passes in the period from July 2022 to July 2024 demonstrate the following breakdown:

	July 2022 - January 2023	February 2023 – July 2023	August 2023 – January 2024	February 2024 – July 2024 (Forecast)
Total numbers of trips	70,774	138,328	125,313	143,937
Average number of trips a month	11,500	23,054	20,885	23,990
Cost (£)	69,772	151,438	139,549	167,440

13. As shown above, the average number of trips per month has remained consistent since February 2023. This is forecast to increase throughout the current period as more guests become established into education and employment routines.
14. The data also shows that trips undertaken during the week account for seventy-seven of the total figure, reflecting that more journeys are being conducted for work and education purposes.

Proposal for Extension to Concessionary Bus Travel for Guests

15. Given the value of the support to guests, it is proposed that the offer of concessionary bus passes is extended for a further period of 8 months, from 01 August 2024 to 31 March 2025. This period, with an end date of the 31 March 2025, aligns with that of other initiatives to support guests and hosts, such as white goods provision and additional host payments. April 2025 will also see the first guests transitioning onto the UPE visa.

16. The costs involved in extending this travel are £1.70 per card for printing and delivery, plus approximately £27,000 per month for all journeys undertaken. It is estimated that a maximum of £220,000 would be required to extend the scheme until 31 March 2025.
17. Derbyshire County Council have indicated that they also seek to extend their support until this expiry date.

Funding the Proposal

18. The Homes for Ukraine scheme is funded by Central Government. The Government previously provided £10,500 per guest who arrived (up to 31 December 2022), or £5,900 as from (1 January 2023 onwards) to upper tier Councils, to enable them to support families in rebuilding their lives and fully integrating into communities. As of 08 May 2024, the Council has received £12,120,825 in Homes for Ukraine tariff funding from Central Government. This tariff funding is not repeated per-annum and is expected to support guests throughout the duration of their visa.
19. It is proposed that the cost of offering this support be funded from the tariff funding received from the Government for each Ukrainian arrival. As of May 2024, the Council has spent £4,432,340 in Homes for Ukraine tariff funding. If the proposal is approved, the available balance of HFU tariff funding at the end of 2024-25 is forecast at £5,958,485.

Other Options Considered

20. Not to extend concessionary bus pass support beyond 31 July 2024. This would severely disrupt Ukrainian guests' access to education and employment opportunities, leading to a reduction in independence and a lack of integration into communities.
21. To extend the support for a longer period than 8 months. This is not recommended as the proposed end date of 31 March 2025 aligns with other HFU support. It is also currently unknown if guests who move onto UPE visas in April 2025 will be eligible for this support.

Reasons for Recommendation

22. Feedback from guests and hosts is that the concessionary bus passes are of immense value in helping families settle into the County and seek education and employment opportunities.
23. Extension of bus passes scheme is conducted in conjunction with Derbyshire County Council and covers all bus routes within the area of both counties. Derbyshire County Council have indicated that they are also seeking approval to extend the scheme for another 8 months.
24. Increasing the level of support to guests has been identified as an effective way to ease financial pressures on hosts and therefore sustain relationships and housing arrangements.
25. Concessionary bus travel passes support all guests regardless of housing arrangements. It is a crucial form of follow-on support once a family has left their host's home.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty,

safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

27. The proposal outlined would use a maximum of £220,000 from the Homes for Ukraine budget over 8 months.
28. There is sufficient available resource within the Homes for Ukraine budget held by the Council to fund the proposal.

Consultation

29. This report has been prepared in consultation with Derbyshire County Council.

Crime and Disorder Implications

30. The Nottinghamshire Homes for Ukraine scheme is a priority of the Council. The Nottinghamshire Homes for Ukraine Steering Group oversees this work and will continue to work together to identify any new and emerging issues including fraud prevention and modern slavery.

Human Rights Implications

31. These have been considered in developing the approach to delivering the Homes for Ukraine scheme which is designed to protect individual and collective rights particularly of the Ukrainian Guests.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

32. Equality implications have been considered during the development of the Council's Homes for Ukraine scheme and continue to be through the Partnership Steering Group.
33. The Homes for Ukraine Scheme allows Ukrainians (and their immediate family members) with no family ties to the UK to be sponsored by individuals who can offer them a home such as a spare room or unoccupied residential self-contained unit.
34. Upper tier Councils have been given a range of responsibilities to discharge collaborating with partners and are required to conduct accommodation, safeguarding, and welfare-checks to ensure that homes are of a suitable standard and that guests arriving in the UK are safe.
35. The Council wants to help new arrivals to settle in Nottinghamshire and support communities who wish to help those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. Building on the Council's expertise and that of partners, including the voluntary and community sector, can inform the development and delivery of support to help guests settle into their communities and access public services when needed.
36. The proposals set out in this report will, as part of larger package of help, support the safe integration of guests into local communities with many guests being women, children, and older people.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

37. The implications for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults have been considered in developing the Nottinghamshire Homes for Ukraine scheme, including a range of specific safeguarding checks, and monitoring arrangements to safeguard both hosts and guests.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

38. The proposal promotes the use of sustainable, local modes of transport. This is crucial in reducing reliance on private vehicles and will result in a reduction in carbon emissions across the County.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health approves:

- 1) The allocation of £220,000 of funding from the Homes for Ukraine budget to extend concessionary travel support provided to guests under the scheme from 01 August 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Mark Walker
Interim Service Director, Place and Communities

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Cathy Harvey, Team Manager, Communities, T: 0115 977 3415, E: cathy.harvey@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (KK 06/06/2024)

39. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health has delegated responsibility under C&PH.2 for support to communities including Community Hub and voluntary and community sector support (including funding) The proposals in this report are therefore within the remit of the Cabinet Member.

Financial Comments (PAA29 05/06/2024)

40. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 27 and 28 of the report. The estimated maximum cost of £220,000 for the extension of concessionary travel support to guests under the Homes for Ukraine from 1 August 2024 to 31 March 2025 is to be met from funding provided to the Council by the Government. Therefore, there are no additional financial implications for the Council arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- [Transport Support for Homes For Ukraine Scheme Guests – 30 January 2024](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All