

<b>Report to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	11 June 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	Changes to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Potential Impacts on Service Users in Sefton		
<b>Report of:</b>	Assistant Director of People - Communities	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Communities and Partnership Engagement		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	No	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	No
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

**Summary:**

To provide information requested by the Committee at its meeting held in February 2024 on the update of visa's issued to refugees on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and how this will impact those that arrived in Sefton.

**Recommendation(s):**

That the report updating on visa's issued to refugees on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and how this will impact those that arrived in Sefton be noted.

**Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

To comply with a previous decision of the Committee and to update on government changes only.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:** (including any Risk Implications)

None. The report is to comply with a previous decision of the Committee.

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

None.

**(B) Capital Costs**

Not applicable.

**Implications of the Proposals:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b>
Not applicable, update only.
<b>Legal Implications:</b>

Not applicable, update only.	
<b>Equality Implications:</b>	
There are no equality implications.	
<b>Impact on Children and Young People: Yes</b>	
<b>Climate Emergency Implications:</b>	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

**Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable: The Council will continue to work with affected groups and tailor support to their needs where appropriate.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Affected groups will be supported in order to prevent homelessness, to live independently and integrate into communities.
Commission, broker and provide core services: If new services are required for this group consideration will be given to what is needed based on the evidence available at the time.
Place – leadership and influencer: Resettlement Team will continue to work closely with commissioned and CVS partners to support any affected groups.
Drivers of change and reform: Sefton's Resettlement service is adaptable to changing needs of affected groups and where this may be the case in future, the service is proven to be able to respond quickly and effectively.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Affected groups are supported into employment and independent accommodation.
Greater income for social investment: Revenue savings from preventing affected groups becoming homeless.
Cleaner Greener: Through sourcing locally available accommodation, there will be less travel needed due to fewer households being placed outside borough.

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

**(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7658/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5758/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

## **(B) External Consultations**

Not applicable.

## **Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the meeting of the Committee.

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Allan Glennon
Telephone Number:	07891398420
Email Address:	allan.glennon@sefton.gov.uk

## **Appendices:**

There are no appendices to this report

## **Background Papers:**

There are no background papers available for inspection.

## **Background**

At its meeting held on 27 February 2024 the Committee considered a Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty update of the Head of Health and Wellbeing and the former Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services. During deliberations on the update a Member of the Committee commented on the potential changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and impacts this would have on service users in Sefton.

The Committee resolved (Minute No. 52 (2)) that the Assistant Director of People (Communities) be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on the potential changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and impacts this would have on service users in Sefton. This is the reason for the submission of this report.

## **Refugees and International Migrants**

A fact sheet at the end of this update provides a brief overview of the different types of international migrants that may come to the UK and a summary of some of the schemes that they may have accessed.

## **Homes for Ukraine – Changes to visas schemes currently open to Ukrainian refugees**

On 19 February 2024 the Government announced some changes to the various visa schemes currently open to Ukrainians.

The **Ukraine Family Scheme** closed to all new applications on 19 February 2024 and the **Ukraine Extension Scheme** will close on 16 May 2024. The Council does not have direct involvement with the Family Scheme.

The Government have detailed their intention to create a new **Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE)**. This scheme will allow Ukrainians already living in the UK under one of the existing Ukrainian visa schemes to apply for a further 18 months permission to stay in the UK when their current visa expires. This includes Ukrainians living in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. They will not be able to apply for this until early 2025.

The details of how the process will work are not yet available and the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing are awaiting confirmation as to what the process will be and if there will be an application fee. The Resettlement Team have been advised that discussions between various Government departments are ongoing and further details will be shared when they are clear on the process. The Home Office have advised that they are preparing to be able to process large numbers of applications for visa extensions in early 2025.

It has been confirmed that the extension period will offer the same rights and entitlements to work, housing, benefits, healthcare, and education as currently apply to Ukrainians in the UK.

The Government also announced changes to the **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**, these changes also took effect on 19 February 2024 and are as follows:

- All visas granted under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme from the above date will be for 18 months, rather than for 36 months as previously has been the case.
- New arrivals who will now have 18-month visas will be eligible to apply for an additional 18-month extension under the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE).
- There has also been a change to sponsor eligibility criteria. Sponsors must now be a British or Irish citizen or should have the right to live in the UK permanently (settled status). Some current sponsors who are in the UK on Homes for Ukraine visas, are renting their own homes and are sponsoring family or friends. It has been confirmed that this is currently unaffected by the changes, and they will be eligible to continue to receive thank you payments.
- We do rematch guests with new hosts when the original sponsor is unable to continue with the hosting arrangement. It has been confirmed that there is no restriction on Ukrainians on Homes for Ukraine visas being able to host guests where rematches are required.
- Funding will remain unchanged for new arrivals. The tariff to Local Authorities will remain at £5,900 for each person and £10,500 for any eligible minors.
- Thankyou payments to sponsors will remain for the duration of the visa period and will remain at £350 for the first 12 months and £500 for the remainder of the visa term. For those on a 36-month visa, the £500 payment can continue for 2 years. For those on an 18-month visa the £500 thankyou payment will only be payable for the additional 6 months.

DLUHC have been unable to confirm if thankyou payments will be payable for those who successfully apply for their visa to be extended by a further 18 months. They have advised that the detail of the scheme is currently being worked out.

### **Impact for Ukrainian refugees in Sefton**

There are currently 105 Ukrainian individual Ukrainians living with hosts on the Homes for Ukraine programme. The table below shows when the visas expire.



If a decision is reached that hosts will no longer receive thank you payments for hosting a Ukrainian household, then it could become unaffordable for them to do so when visas are extended. This could lead to a risk that refugees could present as homeless and potentially impact upon homeless temporary accommodation needs.

The Resettlement Team will continue to work with guests to support them to move to independent accommodation prior to visa end dates. Other mitigations to prevent homelessness will also be considered prior to the above end dates and tailored to refugee needs.

Additionally, there are 140 Ukrainians that have moved on into their own accommodation and are no longer on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, of these 90 are adults and 50 children. Not all have remained in the borough. As they are no longer on scheme and living with a host they will not be impacted by thankyou payments ending.

## Recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny Working Group note the contents of this report.

# Fact Sheet – Refugees and International Migrants

Latest definitions and government schemes linked to refugees and international migrants from Sefton's Resettlement Team

June 2024

Sefton Council 

The descriptions in this fact sheet present a high-level definition of different schemes, and other key definitions, that Sefton Council has either participated in in the past, is currently participating in or may participate in in the future.

## Definitions

### Asylum Seekers

Asylum Seekers are people that have arrived in the UK and have asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee they are known as an asylum seeker. In the UK they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen, for example people seeking asylum are not allowed to work.

Asylum Seekers have no recourse to public funds. They will receive £40.85 a week when provided with somewhere to live. This could be in a flat, house, hostel or bed and breakfast. In some circumstances Asylum Seekers are in hotels. If the Asylum Seeker receives food as part of the support, the funding provided would be £8.24 per week to enable them to purchase non-prescription medication, travel, and clothes. SERCO support and work with Asylum Seekers in the Sefton area.

### Dispersal Accommodation

Dispersal accommodation are areas in the community where the local authority has agreed to take Asylum Seekers up to a defined cluster limit (defined as an assumption that there will no more than one asylum seeker per 200 residents). Suitable accommodation in Sefton is sourced by SERCO using a property procurement process.

### Initial Accommodation (IA) Contingency Hotels

These are hotels procured by the Home Office to accommodate asylum seekers, whilst their applications are processed. Sefton does not currently have any hotels being used for this purpose but there are several across the Liverpool City Region.



NRPF - Glossary of Terms

### No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

If someone has residence in the UK but is subject to immigration control, they may have no recourse to public funds. This means that they cannot claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance.

Public bodies that suspect that someone may have NRPF should conduct further investigations prior to refusing a service.

## **Refugee**

A refugee is someone that has fled war, violence, conflict, or persecution and have crossed an international boundary to find safety in another country. Refugees do not leave their country out of choice.

## **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)**

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers.

## Schemes and Programmes

### **Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)**

ACRS is for vulnerable Afghan citizens who are at risk in Afghanistan due to their beliefs, values, or minority groups. The scheme is delivered by the Home Office.

The Home Office contract the housing of asylum seekers to Serco who are the provider for the Northwest and Midlands. Mears Group and Clearsprings deliver in other parts of the UK. This is known as the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC). In Sefton, Venus provide support to this cohort.

### **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)**

ARAP is for Afghan citizens who worked for or with the UK Government in Afghanistan. The Ministry for Defence decide who is eligible for the programme.

### **Ukraine Family Scheme**

The Ukraine Family Scheme is for eligible displaced Ukrainians due the war in their home country. The scheme is open to UK-based Ukrainians who wish to provide accommodation in the UK to family members fleeing Ukraine. The Home Office complete the initial pre-arrival visa checks for Ukrainians registering onto the scheme.

Ukrainians on this scheme are refugees and can stay in the UK for up to 3 years. The Council does not receive a tariff to support Ukrainians on this scheme.

### **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

The Homes for Ukraine scheme is for eligible displaced Ukrainians due the war in their home country. The Home Office will complete the initial pre-arrival visa checks for Ukrainians registering onto the scheme and successful applicants are then matched with UK households that have volunteered to act as host.



The local authority is notified when a match has been agreed in their area and then completes their necessary checks to ensure it is a safe and suitable match. The local authority will then assist in post-arrival checks and support the sponsor and guest with resettlement.

Ukrainians on this scheme are refugees and can stay in the UK for up to 3 years. The Council receives a tariff to support Ukrainians on this scheme. The scheme falls under the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) once the pre-arrival checks have been completed by the Home Office.

### **Hong Kong British Nation Overseas (HKBN())**

This is a scheme open to those people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up British National (Overseas) status at the point of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997. People and their families holding this status can live work and study in the UK. This scheme falls under the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

### **Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) - Syrian Resettlement Scheme**

This scheme was established in 2015 to resettle displaced Syrian refugees in need of protection. Those that accessed the scheme and became resident in Sefton are now fully integrated and have been exited from the scheme successfully.