

**CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE
COMMITTEE**

12th Meeting 2022, Session 6

21 April 2022

Cover paper

1. This week the Committee will be further considering Scotland's humanitarian response to the crisis in Ukraine.
2. We have a panel of witnesses representing COSLA and three local authorities.
3. The session follows on from evidence heard at earlier meetings on [10 March](#) and [24 March](#).

**CEEAC Committee Clerks
April 2022**

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Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

12th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday, 21st April

Supporting Ukrainians to Scotland

Background

At its meeting on 10th March 2022, the Committee [took evidence from](#) representatives of the Disasters Emergency Committee, the Humanitarian Emergency Fund Panel and the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture on the humanitarian crisis as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Following this, on 24th March 2022, the Committee [took evidence from](#) two panels, firstly the Scottish Refugee Council, JustRight Scotland and the British Red Cross and then from Neil Gray, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine. [SPICe has published a blog](#) setting out the support that will be available to Ukrainians when they arrive in Scotland and also reflects on some of the key issues raised during the Committee's evidence session on 24 March.

Today's meeting is an opportunity for the Committee to discuss the arrangements for welcoming Ukrainians to Scotland and the role local authorities will play in supporting Ukrainians when they arrive.

Issues that Members may wish to explore include:

- Scottish local authorities preparedness to welcome Ukrainians under the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
- What particular services and support Ukrainians arriving in Scotland are likely to need.
- The role of local authorities and the third sector in supporting the operation of the Ukraine settlement schemes.

- How local authorities will support Ukrainians arriving in Scotland under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme where the sponsor is an individual or group rather than the Scottish Government.
- The Scottish Government's discussions with CoSLA and Scottish local authorities on the operation of the Ukraine settlement schemes
- The costs of providing support and services to Ukrainians arriving in Scotland and how these costs will be met.
- The level of funding provided by the UK and Scottish Governments to support local authorities in supporting Ukrainians.
- The lessons that can be learned from Scotland's involvement in other resettlement schemes.

Context

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

The UK Government is operating two schemes to enable Ukrainians fleeing the war to come to the UK.

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.

Ukraine Family Scheme

The [Ukraine Family Scheme](#) allows Ukrainians with immediate or extended family settled in the UK to come and join them once their visa application is accepted. Applying to the scheme will be free and those joining family members in the UK will be granted 3 years leave to remain and will be able to work and have access to

public funds. The Scheme does not currently appear to allow Ukrainians in the UK on temporary work visas to host Ukrainian family members.

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

On 14 March, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove launched a [webpage for sponsors](#) to record their interest, ahead of phase one of the [Homes for Ukraine Scheme](#) opening for applications on 18 March.

Phase one of the scheme will allow sponsors in the UK to nominate a named Ukrainian or a named Ukrainian family to stay with them in their home or in a separate property. Ukrainians arriving in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme will be granted 3 years leave to remain, with entitlement to work, and to access benefits and public services. [Michael Gove also confirmed](#) that local authorities would receive more than £10,000 for each Ukrainian welcomed under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme whilst additional money would be made available for educating children of school age.

On 15 March, the [First Minister told the Scottish Parliament](#) that the Scottish Government had proposed taking on the role of a “supersponsor” for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and that the UK Government had indicated support for the proposal in principle. The First Minister indicated that she hoped that this would mean Scotland could welcome 3,000 Ukrainians very soon.

Welcoming Ukrainians to Scotland

On 11 March, [the First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister](#) in a letter which was co-signed by Anas Sarwar, Patrick Harvie, Lorna Slater and Alex Cole-Hamilton. The First Minister used her letter to set out the work the Scottish Government is doing ahead of welcoming Ukrainian refugees:

“The Scottish Government is already working with local authorities and the Scottish Refugee Council to make sure that our communities are ready to welcome Ukrainian refugees as soon as they are able to come here, and ensure that they have the support that they need.”

The First Minister announced that the Scottish Government would provide £15 million to support the immediate refugee response allocated as follows:

- Just over £11 million of that will be allocated to local authorities;
- £2.25 million will be set aside for temporary accommodation;
- £1.4 million allocated to the Scottish Refugee Council for the expansion of its refugee integration service.

Number of visas issued

At the time of writing, [the data from the UK Government](#) in terms of visas granted has not been updated since 1 April. At that point, by 31 March, the UK had issued a total of 29,200 visas under the two Ukraine visa schemes:

- Ukraine Family Scheme visas: 24,400
- Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme visas: 4,700

These numbers are based on 65,000 visa applications received. Of those visas issued under the Sponsorship Scheme, 210 visas were issued where the sponsor was from Scotland: of which the Scottish Government is super sponsor for 30 of the applications. This means that around 4% of visas issued under the Sponsorship Scheme by 31 March were for Ukrainians intending to go to Scotland though it is not clear how many Ukrainians have applied under the Sponsorship Scheme to come to Scotland.

The role of local authorities in supporting Ukrainians

When Ukrainians arrive in Scotland, local authorities will be 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.

Lessons from the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

The Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee held two evidence sessions on asylum seekers and refugees on [3 February](#) and [10 February](#) 2022. This next section of the briefing is reproduced from the SPICe briefings prepared for those meetings.

On [2 September 2021](#), the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, updated the parliament on resettlement under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in Scotland. He said that before June 2021, five Scottish local authorities had welcomed 400 people under the locally employed scheme since 2014. When arrivals were stepped in late June 2021 to the end of August, a further 160 people (43 families) arrived in eight Scottish local authorities. A further 70 individuals (20 families) were expected in the first few weeks of September.

A total of 18 local authorities had confirmed their commitment to resettlement when the statement was made, while others were going through the process of confirming their position. The Cabinet Secretary said that local authorities need more detail on the ACRS to make further decisions on longer term commitments and participation.

COSLA has said that Scottish local authorities are playing a disproportionate role in the efforts to accommodate people from Afghanistan, and that all local authorities have committed to participating in both ARAP and ACRS.

“Nearly a hundred families (around 400 individuals) have arrived in Scotland and are making their homes here while a further c. 40 properties are awaiting families to be matched to them. There are also a number of bridging hotels operating in several local authority areas. The local authorities and their community planning partners continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the families who are in the hotels are able to access all the services and information they need before being relocated to their new permanent homes.”

It has also said that there are “significant issues around the matching and transfer processes from bridging hotels to local authority accommodation”. This has a negative impact on the Afghan families and the ability of local authorities to fulfil their commitment to support Afghan people.

COSLA told the Social Justice and Social Security Committee that it should consider the lack of clarity on and implications of the different immigration statuses that people entering the UK on the different schemes will be granted and the implications of this for their future access to rights, entitlements and protection. It suggested the Committee monitor whether resettlement and relocation programmes meet the needs and protect the rights of people seeking refuge in the UK.

In evidence to the Social Security and Social Justice Committee on 3 February, Edinburgh Council said that it had only, so far, supported families in bridging accommodation, 30 families since September 2021. Support is based on the model developed base on their Syrian resettlement support. However, the support available is limited by the nature or their temporary stay in Edinburgh.

Councillor Aitken said Glasgow is supporting 37 Afghans through the current scheme but has been supporting Afghans since 2014. The matching process of accommodation from the Home Office has been slow, so people are staying in hotels, which has a negative impact on mental health. The situation means there is limited information on the complexities of their needs or associated trauma to allow preparation for supporting when they are matched with accommodation. RSLs in Glasgow have made offers of accommodation, but properties cannot be held on to indefinitely.

COSLA said the matching challenges are replicated across Scotland. There is concern from local government, not just in Scotland, but the UK, that a large number of properties are sitting empty, with refugees staying in hotels. This places pressure on local authorities who have existing housing challenges.

Iain McIver, Senior Researcher, SPICe Research

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