



REPORT TITLE: Ukrainian Refugee Support

Dates between which decision will be taken	Earliest date: 19 May 2022 Latest date: 23 May 2022
Cabinet Member	Cllr Kathy Williams, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery, in consultation with Cllr Dave Norman, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Parking and Libraries
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	To seek approval for two contract variations to enable additional support to be provided to Ukrainian refugees.
Recommendations	<p>That the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Parking and Libraries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. ratifies a decision by the Deputy Director of Public Health to modify the council's contract with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) relating to the provision of a Gloucestershire Refugee Resettlement Programme by adding the provision of support services to Ukrainian refugees to the services already provided thereunder. Such modification was necessitated by the unforeseeable nature the Ukrainian refugee crisis. The term of such modification will continue for an initial period of one year and include an option to extend such term for a further period of one year;2. delegates authority to the Executive Director: Adult Social Care and Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery to determine whether to exercise such option to extend on the expiry of the initial one year period;3. ratifies a decision by the Deputy Director of Public Health to modify the council's contract with Prepaid Financial Services Ltd (PFS) for the provision of Prepaid Card Account Services by adding the delivery and administration of "Welcome Payments" by card to Ukrainian refugees to the services already provided thereunder. Such modification was necessitated by the unforeseeable nature the Ukrainian refugee crisis and will continue for a period of six months.

<p>Reasons for Recommendations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The modification to the council’s contract with GARAS for the provision of a Gloucestershire Refugee Resettlement Programme will enable GARAS to meet the for the requirements of the council’s Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme and the resettlement and support requirements of Ukrainian refugees. 2. The modification to the council’s contract with PFS for the provision of Prepaid Card Account Services will enable it to ensure that all Ukrainian refugees will receive a £200 welcome payment which is funded from the overall £10,500 allocated to the local authority for each refugee. The £10,500 per refugee allocation is a ring-fenced budget specifically for the HFU scheme. 								
<p>Resource Implications</p>	<p>The budget to fund the above service modifications is coming from the £10,500 funding allocated by the Home Office to Tier 1 Local Authorities for each refugee. We currently anticipate 1500 Ukrainian arrivals; and as such our expected budget envelope is £15.75 million. The remainder of the funding will be used for the requirements set out in the Homes for Ukraine – guidance for councils. This includes completing property checks, welcome visits, and other needs identified as the scheme develops, such as Free School Meal (FSM) provision.</p> <p><u>Modification of the council’s contract with GARAS for the provision of a Gloucestershire Refugee Resettlement Programme:</u></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="411 1191 1433 1953"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="418 1200 820 1258">Service</th> <th data-bbox="826 1200 1426 1258">Cost</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="418 1267 820 1438">Delivery of support services for Ukrainian refugees (staffing costs and overheads)</td> <td data-bbox="826 1267 1426 1438">£198,000 per annum (£396,000 if the council elects to exercise its one year extension option)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="418 1447 820 1877">Additional funding to support families as required. This will contribute to translation costs, transport for refugees to meet support workers, venue hire and refreshments for community cohesion events, plus other identified needs.</td> <td data-bbox="826 1447 1426 1877">£20 per guest = 1500 x £20 = £30,000 per annum (£60,000 per annum if the council elects to exercise its one year extension option)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="418 1886 820 1944">Total</td> <td data-bbox="826 1886 1426 1944">£456,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Modification of the council’s contract with PFS for the provision of Prepaid</p>	Service	Cost	Delivery of support services for Ukrainian refugees (staffing costs and overheads)	£198,000 per annum (£396,000 if the council elects to exercise its one year extension option)	Additional funding to support families as required. This will contribute to translation costs, transport for refugees to meet support workers, venue hire and refreshments for community cohesion events, plus other identified needs.	£20 per guest = 1500 x £20 = £30,000 per annum (£60,000 per annum if the council elects to exercise its one year extension option)	Total	£456,000
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Background Documents	Homes for Ukrainians - Guidance for Councils												
Statutory Authority													
Divisional Councillor(s)	All												
Officer	<p>Any representations should be sent to:</p> <p>Name: Siobhan Farmer Tel. no: 01452 324249 Email: Siobhan.farmer@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>By 5pm on 18 May 2022</p>												
Timeline	There is an urgent need to implement this scheme. A decision is therefore sought at the earliest feasible point.												

Background

The “Homes for Ukraine” (HFU) Scheme

1. There are two main schemes for supporting citizens from the Ukraine to seek refuge in the UK. The first is the Ukraine Family Scheme which allows applicants to join family members or extend their stay in the UK. This does not come with any specific funding.
2. The scheme that requires input from councils (upper and lower tier) is the HFU scheme. This will allow Ukrainians and their immediate family members with no family ties to the UK to be sponsored by individuals or organisations who can offer them a home such as a spare room or unoccupied residential self-contained unit.
3. The scheme is uncapped. Beneficiaries are able to live and work in the UK for up to three years. They can access benefits, NHS healthcare, employment and other support.
4. Funding of £10,500 per person will be made available to local authorities, with an additional top-up for child education. This will be paid to Upper Tier authorities for funding all of the associated activities to support the Ukrainian guests when they arrive in the UK with additional funding for early years and education places. £200 of this funding is designated as a ‘welcome’ payment for newly arrived refugees.
5. Sponsors are expected to provide rent free accommodation for a minimum of six months, with an optional ‘thank you’ tax free payment of £350 per month available to people who can accommodate one or more households for up to 12 months (limited to one payment per residential address).
6. There is a requirement from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to complete five checks for all sponsor settings. The checks are: (i) accommodation exists; (ii) accommodation is satisfactory; (iii) DBS checks have commenced; (iv) safeguarding checks have been completed; (v) guest has arrived. These checks are being carried out by a partnership of the district councils and the county council.
7. 950 individuals have been identified so far as matching with a sponsor in Gloucestershire. However, the scheme is uncapped and it is possible that more refugees will be sponsored in Gloucestershire. This report has therefore costed for up to 1500 Ukrainian refugees for payment card administration to allow for some flexibility.

Coordination of support for refugees in Gloucestershire

8. Members of the Gloucestershire Strategic Housing Partnership are coordinating the response to the HFU scheme. The Strategic Housing Partnership is hosted by Gloucester City Council and work on behalf of the seven local authorities, the Clinical Commissioning Group, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

9. The partnership has been leading the response to existing Home Office refugee and asylum seeker schemes including the Afghan Resettlement Programme and the coordination and oversight of contingency hotels which house asylum seekers awaiting applications to be processed.
10. Members of the Strategic Housing Partnership group are working collectively to ensure that the HFU scheme works effectively in Gloucestershire so that as many people as possible receive the support they need in the County. County Council representatives will ensure that all aspects of their services continue to be covered (e.g., safeguarding, education, public health, adult social care) and District Council representatives will attend to cover housing and benefit related issues. The Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service (GFRS) are completing home visits. Structures and staff in place to support the COVID-19 response have been used to help deliver the response to the Ukrainian situation.
11. The Full Council at GCC condemned the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces and released a motion detailing their full views. This included highlighting their agreement to work with both district colleagues and GARAS to provide support for all refugees in Gloucestershire.

Delivery of resettlement support

12. Due to the increased numbers of refugees expected due to the situation in Ukraine, there is a need for additional resettlement support to help refugees both on arrival and as they begin building their lives in the UK.
13. Resettlement support needs to be responsive to the individual needs of each refugee. It is expected that each refugee will be allocated a case worker who can support in the following areas:
 - Immigration status and related issues, including Biometric Residence Permits and residency.
 - Support in accessing Housing, including by preparing for longer-term alternatives to initial Hosting arrangements.
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Financial stability, including accessing relevant benefits.
 - Childcare and education, including ESOL for adults
 - Skills training and employment
 - Cultural and community integration
14. The council's contract with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) for the provision of a Gloucestershire Refugee Resettlement Programme (the "GRRP contract") was awarded in April 2021 with a total value of £1.328 million. The specification for this contract was designed to support refugees from Syria, but the principles set out in the GRRP specification align with the support required by Ukrainian refugees. The principles in the GRRP contract are as follows:
 - Tailor support to individual refugees and families

- Provide intensive support earlier on in the contract and gradually taper it off as the contract progresses.
- Seek to build resilience and independence in every intervention and element of service design undertaking a strengths-based approach to support planning.
- Enhancing the ability of mainstream services to support refugees rather than duplicating services or adding additional pressure.
- Caseworker support is to be underpinned with support in the locality hubs and services within the localities.
- Support community development around ongoing services to support the refugees to integrate.
- Supported by and integrating with the existing Syrian families who are focused on independence and needing only light touch approaches.

15. The same principles apply to both the services provided under the GRRP contract and the modified services described in this Report, save for the fact that the GRRP contract when awarded did not anticipate that support thereunder would be provided to Ukrainian communities who have recently resettled in Gloucestershire due to the war in their country and the offer of seeking refuge in the UK through the HFU scheme. .

16. A strategy for future resettlement services in Gloucestershire will be developed this year. This will aim to develop a consistent approach towards supporting refugees and asylum seekers across Gloucestershire. A one-year term plus a one year extension option has been agreed to allow for time to review the current contracts and processes in place.

Welcome payments

17. Each refugee from Ukraine is eligible for a £200 Welcome Payment. The purpose of this payment is to support initial subsistence costs and urgent necessities whilst access to wider benefits is arranged. Payments are funded from the £10,500 allocated to GCC for each refugee.

18. Payments are made using a pre-paid card system. GCC holds an existing contract with PFS to administer payments for direct budget payments in social care.

19. Costs associated with the pre-paid cards relate to a monthly charge for the administration of the cards which is handled by PFS. There is also a cost of £5 per card. The allocation of £200 onto each card is managed within GCC and these costs do not need to be accounted for in any variation to the contract.

Options

20. There are three options for consideration:

Option 1: Refuse to ratify the Recommendations contained in this report – this would mean the existing service from GARAS continues to operate but no additional staff in post. There are significant risks to this as GARAS is already providing services to other refugee groups that need support and additional staffing is needed to provide the

support required for Ukrainian refugees. Funding is provided for each refugee to provide support and not doing so would fail to meet the requirements of the Home Office and be a reputational and equalities risk.

The withdrawal of a card payment system would mean that newly arrived refugees would not be able to access the Welcome Payment. The [guidance for councils](#) on the HFU scheme states “The council where the sponsor accommodation is located should provide an interim payment (in line with other resettlement schemes) of £200 per guest for subsistence costs. The £200 payment is factored into the tariff and does not need to be repaid by the guest. Councils should agree a plan locally to determine how this payment is delivered.” If the card payment scheme is withdrawn, there will not be an effective method of delivering the payment in place.

Option 2: Ratify the modification the GRRP contract on the basis set out in the above Recommendations; and Ratify the modification of the council’s contract with PFS for the provision of Prepaid Card Account Services on the basis set out in the above Recommendations. This is the recommended option.

Option 3: Open tender process – this would result in delays in implementing the urgent allocation of support for Ukrainian refugees. GARAS has been identified as the only existing supplier that is able to provide this service. GARAS has experience in delivering refugee resettlement support in Gloucestershire across multiple previous and ongoing programmes and has considerable expertise in this area. It is not expected that there would be any significant benefit from an open tender process at this point given it would take considerably longer to implement a provider and this is time critical issue. In addition, there is a longer term plan in place to offer an open tender process and to consolidate existing refugee resettlement programmes into one service.

Risks

21. There is a risk in respect of any contract modification that it may be subject to legal challenge under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (“PCRs”). While it is acknowledged that a contract modification is permissible under the PCRs only on very limited grounds, the modification to the GRRP contract is fully justified in this instance under Regulation 72(1)(c) PCRs on grounds that:

- a) the value of the proposed modification will not exceed 50% of the value of the original contract; and
- b) the modification will not alter the overall nature of the contract; and
- c) the need for the modification was brought about by the unforeseeable nature the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

The modification to the council’s contract with PFS for the provision of Prepaid Card Account Services is permitted under the rules of the framework agreement from which such services were procured.

22. Homes for Ukraine provides a new model of support for refugees which has not been offered to other refugees who have recently arrived in the UK, for example

from Afghanistan. There is a risk that the additional offer of support for Ukrainians could cause dissatisfaction or a perception of unequal treatment amongst other refugees and the organisations that support them or requests for additional funding for other groups. This will need to be monitored through the structures set up to support the HFU scheme.

23. There is a risk that the £200 welcome payment is not used appropriately or is lost. To mitigate this, minors' payments will be allocated to their parent or guardian's card. Gloucestershire County Council will be administering the payment and will ensure that the cards are delivered to the correct person. Any reports of mis-use will be followed up.

Financial implications

24. There is no direct cost to Gloucestershire County Council. The Government is providing councils with funding of £10,500 per person under this scheme for the first year. This funding is intended to enable councils to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities and all costs identified in this report will come from this payment..
25. The Government funding is intended to cover the costs arising for the first year of support provided.

Climate change implications

26. Not applicable

Equality implications

27. Has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? Yes / No
28. An EIA has not yet been completed due to the urgent nature of this report but is underway.
29. The principal equality issues are set out below:
- The cash payment should support newly arrived refugees to address urgent needs and to help them to settle into their host homes. Given the trauma that many refugees will have faced, it is important that this first period of settling is supported appropriately so that people have the best chance of being comfortable in their host families. Ensuring fair access to the cash payments is important and will be overseen by GCC.
 - Appropriate consideration will be given to the needs of refugees arriving who are from protected characteristic groups and any additional support required will be tailored to their needs by GARAS.
 - GARAS is a Gloucestershire based organisation and has an excellent understanding of local communities and the challenges they face. This means

that it is well placed to support refugees to integrate effectively in their new communities and reduce the chance of entrenching inequalities.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

30. GCC's Information Management Service has been consulted. A DPIA has been recommended and will be completed.
31. The pre-paid card system records how cards are being used and where payments are made. This has potential data protection implications for the individuals using the cards. This has been discussed with the GCC Information Management team. The company administering the cards are General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) compliant.
32. The existing GRRP contract has been reviewed by the Information Management Service and the appropriate data protection clauses are included.
33. The [Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for Councils](#) sets out the authorisation in place for personal data to be shared to help support the sponsor arrangement.

Social value implications

34. Supporting refugees locally provides an opportunity for the community, local businesses, and anchor institutions to work together to help people that have experienced trauma. In time, refugees supported by the local community may become an important part of the local community themselves. Refugees may be skilled workers who are able to contribute to the local economy and local public sector roles.

Consultation feedback

35. The approach set out in this report has been shared with colleagues in the Strategic Housing Partnership and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

Officer recommendations

36. It is recommended that:

- The GRRP contract is varied to provide additional funding of £228,000 (plus one year extension option of £228,000) to GARAS to deliver the HFU specification
- The PFS contract is varied to provide additional funding of £31,500 to support the administration and provision of pre-paid cards for the Welcome Payment

Performance management/follow-up

37. The GRRP contract is currently managed by Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. However, oversight of the contract will be held jointly by the Strategic Housing Partnership of which GCC is a member.

38. The PFS contract is managed by Adult Social Care within GCC and will continue to be monitored by this service.