

Jane Hutt MS,  
Minister for Social Justice,  
Welsh Government

13 July 2022

Dear Jane,

Thank you for your response on 14 June to my earlier correspondence. As I mentioned, the Committee held further evidence sessions at our meeting on 22 June, where we heard from local government and the voluntary sector about their experiences of providing homes for people from Ukraine.

The evidence we heard at those sessions was generally supportive of the Welsh Government's approach and the super-sponsor scheme. Witnesses welcomed the provision of welcome centres to place people for an initial three months on arrival and supported the decision to pause the super-sponsor scheme to focus on fulfilling existing commitments. We heard that the pause will enable local authorities to make sure that they're planning accordingly, moving forward.

Your written statement on 6 July confirmed that the pause will remain in place. We heard of the importance of communicating with third sector organisations prior to recommencing the scheme, to ensure they have sufficient notice and can plan accordingly. We therefore re-iterate their request that advance notification is provided to the third sector and all other relevant stakeholders.

Your statement also confirms that over 4,000 visas have been issued via the super-sponsor route. We would be grateful if you could clarify how many have actually arrived in Wales and the expected timescale for the remaining people to arrive. We note the opening of further welcome centres, however we remain concerned about the availability of suitable longer term accommodation once the three month period in welcome centres comes to an end. We know there are also around 10,000 people in temporary accommodation across Wales, as well as refugees from Afghanistan, still awaiting permanent accommodation. Although your statement emphasises that the Welsh Government is working with local government, the NHS and the third sector to support people arriving via the super-sponsor route into appropriate move-on accommodation, we're concerned that

it will be very difficult for local authorities and registered social landlords to find sufficient accommodation.

We again heard of the importance of undertaking safeguarding checks before placing people into alternative accommodation, we therefore welcome the assurance given in your statement that no-one will move into accommodation arranged by the Welsh Government until such checks have been completed. However, it is crucial that safeguarding checks be undertaken prior to placing people who arrive through any of the possible routes, including the Ukraine Family Scheme.

We heard that safeguarding will be the main concern around plans to allow under-18s to come to the UK unaccompanied if they have written permission from parents or guardians. We would be grateful for an update on these plans, including the development of guidance about how the scheme would operate in practice.

We heard particular concerns from local authorities about the lack of information they are provided on the placement of people through the Ukraine Family Scheme. We were told that local authorities are unable to undertake the same checks for those arriving under that scheme as they do not receive the information from the UK Government. Being able to access this data is essential for local authorities to carry out the necessary checks and also for them to be able to plan effectively for the demand on services in their areas. We understand that the WLGA has written to the UK Government on this and we ask that the Welsh Government also raise this with the UK Government to emphasise the importance of local authorities receiving the data they need.

Your statement also confirms that the Welsh Government will fund a £350 monthly payment to hosts who take in a family through the Ukraine Family Scheme. We would be grateful if you could clarify how that funding will be administered. Given that local authorities don't receive data on the location of people who arrive through this scheme, it is unclear to us whether it will depend on hosts coming forward to identify themselves to local authorities,

We again heard that providing support to hosts is essential to ensuring effective placements; your statement notes that you will be asking households and landlords to come forward to offer to host people from Ukraine. We welcome your commitment to funding the information, training and support sessions for hosts through Housing Justice Cymru and the extension of the Wales Sanctuary Service.

We also heard of the importance of people having access to information and advice on the opportunities available to them. We were told that some people in the welcome centres would like to be accommodated in England, close to family and other support networks who may be located there. Whilst there's an agreement in place within Wales that people can be accommodated outside the welcome centre local authority area, we would be grateful for further information on the cross-border arrangements to accommodate people in Wales wishing to re-locate to England and vice-versa.

This is a very important issue to the Committee and we will continue to monitor the situation. We would therefore like to invite you to appear before our Committee later in the year so that we can assess what progress has been made in securing longer term homes for people from Ukraine. We will be in touch shortly with a proposed date for the session.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.  
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

