

Update from Erin Bower, Derbyshire County Council – 10th May 2022

The update is as follows:

- We are continuing to see increasing numbers coming to us. We have around 400 hosts registered in Derbyshire who will be welcoming around 650 Ukrainian guests.
- There is still a backlog at the Home Office in relation to visas being issued. We do not receive any updates on this and cannot speed this up unfortunately. The checks we carry out are not related to the visa process and will not hold this up at all. We are being advised that the Home Office has incorrectly told hosts that local authorities can report on visa progress but this isn't the case.
- We are continuing to process the checks on hosts and their properties. I hope this is running smoothly now but if there are any issues please let me know.
- We ask hosts to provide us with an e-mail address of their guests as soon as they arrive, but not before. We can't issue the payments in advance and as travel plans change we do need this to be as soon as, or after guests arrive. We will send them a code which they can present at the post office in exchange for cash. We aim to provide codes within 24 hours of being notified of them.
- We are responding to a lot of e-mails and aiming to do this within 24 hours. Please take a look at the Derbyshire County Council website – on the front screen there is a link to the information on Ukrainian refugees including a new FAQ's section that can answer a lot of queries.
- We are setting up an automated payment system for hosts to send them the £350 payment each month. We will be sending a form out by e-mail later this week asking for bank details so please look out for this and send this back to us. We are only allowed to pay hosts 4 weeks after their guest arrives and as soon as all of the checks have been completed. The form will remind hosts that they must inform us if their guests move out so ensure they are not being overpaid.
- In addition to that we have done some more work to plan training sessions for hosts, which will include information on being a good host & overcoming difficulties, some training on how to help those who have experienced trauma and also an input from the Ukrainian Association to assist with understanding cultural differences. We are finalising dates and venues and hope to be able to notify you of these soon. The drop in sessions will follow on from those training sessions and we will look to hosts to find out what information and services they would like us to put in place at these sessions.

In relation to the queries below

- Job centre – This seems quite a strict response as usually Job Coaches are quite sympathetic towards refugees and would not be looking to pressure people into work from the very beginning. I am happy to follow this up if you could let me know which job centres in particular have been taking this approach?

- Post 6 months – we have been advised that where placements end or breakdown, there will be a re-matching process put in place. I understand that we will receive details of how this will work very soon. This is good news as previously the guidance suggested that guests would have to present as homeless which is not ideal. As I understand it, there will be a 'back up' list of hosts who we can check in advance that we can refer guests onto. As soon as I hear more I will let you know.