

South Oxfordshire District Council Ukraine Scheme (14th April)

Here's the latest on South Oxfordshire District Council's (SODC) system-wide response to the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. Included in this update are some details on the accommodation and safeguarding checks we are undertaking and on the progress we are making on the financial support payments to guests.

Accommodation

Visits are progressing well in both South and Vale – and we are planning to have most visits carried out by the end of this week – this is also the case in the city and Cherwell, with West expecting to have them done by the end of next week. More than half of all hosts are currently within South and Vale.

Our goal, as a system, is to be practical and provide the support our guests and hosts need in the quickest and safest way possible. This does mean that the checks required of local authorities by government may not happen simultaneously. Our visiting officers may be the first contact hosts have received since applying to be a sponsor. The response from hosts has been positive to date.

For these visits, officers are using a checklist, with an accompanying set of standards, that has been agreed by all Oxfordshire councils – in line with the government's expectations. The suitability of the accommodation visit includes such things as the number of bedrooms in a property, the location of bedrooms and sleeping arrangements.

The number of properties being rejected for overcrowding or poor housing conditions is low in every district but remains a concern. We are also recording examples of where the accommodation is safe but there may be insufficient space for the number of Ukrainian nationals expected to live there. This may save time for any houses and hosts that can be re-matched once a system for that is developed. Currently, there is no national guidance on this.

We are asking government for this and on what happens if a placement breaks down, including what financial resources and support are available to rehome people in this situation. While we wait for this information, we are working together with our partners on developing plans to respond locally should we need to.

Guests have already started to arrive with their hosts in a growing number of properties.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding visits have also been taking place and will increase significantly as more Ukrainian guests arrive. DBS checks have been initiated for all the hosts visited.

There has been some media interest nationally around the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the safeguarding checks in place. To reassure, the safeguarding visit runs through a comprehensive set of questions around living arrangements and relationships. The full process and assessment of suitability will not be made until the Disclosure and Barring Service check has concluded and all other checks and visits have taken place. [Information on the checks](#) that take place can be found on the county council's website.

Finance

Support payments of £200 in cash per Ukrainian national have been taking place as part of home visits. As above, to support our guests getting the help they need as quickly as possible, we are working in system to ensure that the first visit to take place once the guest(s) has arrived with their host is the one to facilitate the cash handover.

Signposting

You can direct general Ukraine queries to either:

- www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ukraine
- **Oxfordshire Ukraine helpline:** +44 1865 966444 / 01865 966 444 (opening hours: 8.45am - 5pm, Monday to Friday. Closed weekends and bank holidays).
- **Email:** ukraineresponse@oxfordshire.gov.uk