

# Meeting for Ukrainian befrienders

## **General information I used to start the meeting**

Dumfries and Galloway has the largest Ukrainian population in Scotland. They're concentrated around Lockerbie and Dumfries although I've no doubt there are Ukrainians throughout the region. This means that we can expect a reasonable proportion of those that come to the UK and certainly to Scotland to be interested in settling here.

The longer the current situation goes on the more likely it is that refugees will want to come here and the demographics of those who do will change as well. At present we see mostly women with their children coming here because most of the men are staying in the regions. It's also true that most of the people who've fled Ukraine want to stay close – seeing the war as a temporary thing and hoping to return to their homeland.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has said Scotland could welcome 3,000 Ukrainians immediately – it's not entirely clear how this will work out but it does mean that we can expect to see people coming in any day now.

The NHS is preparing to welcome 80 – 100 people to accommodation which they're setting up in the Crichton. They're planning something which I think will be really important which is a community hub outwith the accommodation itself which will be a suitable place for the people who come there (expected to be mothers with children in the main) to meet with each other and the local population as well as important services who might be interested in reaching out.

I know a lot of people are wondering about how the hosting will work. It's my understanding that, if you've offered accommodation but don't have a name you wish to sponsor, the government will place your offer in front of would-be refugees who will then have the chance to opt for your offer. You will also have a chance to accept or reject someone who does want to come to you. However this is still unclear. What I would say is that I don't think that any of the sites I've seen spring up to match people with hosts is definitely realistic and MOOL will not be doing this. The need for safeguarding at both ends of the process is beyond our capabilities.

It would be ideal if the refugees had a single point of information about official situations. This has happened for the Syrians and we've asked the Council if they will be putting someone in post for this. We haven't heard back but I think this is probable. The council will be getting £10,000 per family from central government but this is to help deal with the load on local services and won't directly go to hosts. The hosts will get £350 per month but cannot charge rent or expect services. There was a great seminar on Monday hosted by Citizens UK and they've very kindly offered a recording which I'll put a link to on our website.

Insurance – Home customers To make life easier, if you're taking in Ukrainian refugees, you now don't need to let us know. When you are renewing, please do tell us, but we won't update your policy to reflect extra people. You must tell us if they stay for more than 12 months. Car customers If you'd like to use your car in the UK to help with the Ukraine crisis (for transporting goods or driving to fundraising centres), you do not need to let us know. If your mileage is changing a lot, or you need an extra driver on your policy, please let us know.

So what are we aiming to do?

I want us to set up a web of support both for the hosts and the refugees. I think, but I'm open to suggestions that this involves three elements

1. Networks of local hosts – this means that really local information can be shared and experiences and support offered on a strong local basis. This should be matched with a local support group as well. These would be people who aren't hosting themselves but would help lift the load on the hosts themselves. They might be specialists (say in setting up communication stuff) or just locally knowledgeable.
2. Transport is going to be vital. Bus services are not great and we can assume that the arrivals will not have their own transport.
3. Centralised information, both about what's needed and the answers to that need. This will mean people who can go out and research. It's important that this doesn't try to duplicate existing sources of information.

#### Agenda

1. General intro and welcome
2. Networks and localities
3. Resources
  - Clothes
  - Bedding
  - TVs
  - Connectivity
4. Information
  - Citizens advice bureau
  - Social Services
  - Council
  - Language
5. Transport
6. Open floor for questions