

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

10 November 2023

Dear Dame Meg Hillier,

I write in response to the Public Accounts Committee's call for evidence for their inquiry into *Homes for Ukraine*.

As the Committee will be aware, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the UK's National Statistical Institute and largest producer of official statistics. We aim to provide a firm evidence base for sound decisions and develop the role of official statistics in democratic debate. This submission provides evidence from our Homes for Ukraine Survey, which we hope will be of assistance to the inquiry.

Evidence in this submission includes information on receipt of 'thank you' payments and the cost-of-living pressures on ability to provide support. Data on hosting duration and intended length of hosting shows that many hosts are providing longer-term accommodation, not just short-term emergency housing. While supporting guests search for their own accommodation, many hosts have experienced difficulties related to unaffordability of housing and lack of a guarantor. Satisfaction with support provided on the scheme to sponsors is quite high but over half have still found hosting challenging.

Background to the Survey

The ONS established the Homes for Ukraine Survey to address a lack of data about the characteristics, motivations, and attitudes of scheme hosts. This complements administrative data available from the Home Office, including arrival numbers. The ONS worked closely with the Home Office and the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to ensure delivery of timely and relevant analysis on this subject. ONS has consulted and shared its analysis with departments across government.

There have been three ONS-funded sponsor surveys collecting information from registered sponsors:

- Survey 1¹ collected information 7 to 14 July 2022 (around 4 months since the scheme launched) from sponsors registered by 7 July 2022. It captured fundamental information from 17,702 sponsors early in the scheme.

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/experiencesofhomesforukraineschemesponsorsuk/7to14july2022>

- Survey 2² collected information 21 to 28 November 2022 from 8,770 sponsors recontacted around 4 months since their first survey, with many approaching the end of the initial 6-month hosting period. This followed-up with sponsors to capture changing experiences, focus deeper on urgent issues, and inform evolving policy needs.
- Survey 3³ – collected information 10 to 21 August 2023 from sponsors registered by 8 August 2023. This captured information from 14,851 sponsors, some of whom had been surveyed before.

Analysis of the experiences of displaced Ukrainians who have entered the UK under the Ukrainian Humanitarian Schemes is published in the UK Humanitarian Response Insight Survey series⁴. Generally, this analysis does not distinguish between type of visa scheme so is not included in this written evidence unless specified otherwise.

Most of the evidence presented in this submission is from the most up-to-date sponsor survey, Survey 3 (10 to 21 August 2023)⁵. Reference is made to previous surveys only where specified.

Funding provided for the scheme

Sponsors are eligible for a monthly payment from the UK government as a thank you for hosting and some English councils offer discretionary payments to ‘top-up’ thank you payments.

Payments to sponsors – monthly “thank you” payments

Data collected from Survey 3 showed 88% of current hosts reported having received ‘thank you’ payments; 67% received these on time and 21% had received payments but some monthly instalments were either late or missing. Some had not received payments (12%), but for most this was because the first payment was not yet due (5%).

After guests have been hosted in the UK for more than 12 months, monthly ‘thank you’ payments increase from £350 to £500. The following estimates on this page refer to data collected from hosts from Survey 3 in England only.

Most (72%) current hosts were aware of the increase in ‘thank you’ payments. Around 6 in 10 current hosts (64%) strongly or somewhat agree that this increase in payments

²<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/experiencesofhomesforukrainschemesponsorsuk/21to28november2022>

³<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/experiencesofhomesforukrainschemesponsorsuk/10to21august2023>

⁴<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/visaholdersenteringtheukundertheukrainehumanitarianschemes/latest>

⁵<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/experiencesofhomesforukrainschemesponsorsuk/10to21august2023>

encouraged them to host for longer. The majority (78%) are very or fairly satisfied with the engagement on the 'thank you' payments with their local council since their guests moved in.

Payments to sponsors – top-up “thank you” payments

Data collected from Survey 3, showed nearly half of current hosts in England (46%) received a discretionary top up payment from their local council. Over half (58%) of these said that this has incentivised them to continue hosting.

The English region with the highest proportion of current hosts who had received discretionary top up payments is the South East (66%), compared with the lowest proportion in the North East (9%).

Challenges and future risks

Sponsors are asked to host their Ukrainian guests for a minimum of 6 months. Early on there was some concern among members of the cross-government Russia-Ukraine Analysis Group (RUAG) that after 6 months many sponsors could stop hosting, causing Ukrainian guests to require alternative accommodation. However, data provided from the most recent and previous surveys suggested this risk was lower than first thought.

Hosting duration

Data collected from Survey 3 showed that most hosts (58%) were providing longer-term accommodation until their guests find alternative accommodation and 37% of hosts were providing more permanent accommodation. Only 3% described their hosting arrangement as short-term emergency accommodation.

Analysis from the UK Humanitarian Response Insight Survey (27 April to 15 May 2023)⁶ found most adults on the Homes for Ukraine scheme were very or fairly satisfied with their current accommodation (92%). This compares with 87% of adults on the Ukraine Family scheme.

Data collected in Survey 3 showed almost half (48%) of current hosts had been providing accommodation for guests for 12 months or more. Almost a third (31%) had been providing accommodation between 6 and 12 months. A similar proportion of current hosts had been providing accommodation for 3 to 6 months (10%) and less than 3 months (11%).

⁶<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/visaholdersenteringtheukundertheukrainehumanitarianschemes/previousReleases>

Hosting intentions

Analysis of data collected from Survey 3 revealed variation in how long current hosts intend to provide accommodation in total. Just over half (51%) reported 18 months or more, compared with 5% who intended to host for less than 6 months.

For the 5% of current hosts who intend for their current hosting arrangement to last under 6 months, the most common reason reported for the length of time was that they only intended to provide sponsorship for this period (25%).

For the 51% of current hosts who intend the current hosting arrangements to last 18 months or more, the most common reason reported for the length of time was that sponsors have built a strong relationship with the guests (67%).

An increase in value of monthly 'thank you' payments (54%) would encourage current hosts to continue to provide accommodation beyond their current intended period. However, 1 in 10 current hosts reported that "nothing" would encourage them to host for longer (10%).

Of those who don't know how long they intend their current hosting arrangement to last (19%), the majority (72%) reported it was because they are unsure what their guests will want to do. Other reasons include needing more information on how extending sponsorship will work (24%).

Challenges helping guests access alternative accommodation

Data collected from Survey 3 showed that of those who are currently hosting guests and have helped them look for private rented accommodation, the majority (69%) reported experiencing barriers during the search. The most common barriers were that "Guests cannot afford to rent privately" (66%) and "Guests cannot provide a guarantor" (50%).

When asked what support they think guests need to help them move into private rented accommodation, or to find independent living arrangements, the most common types of support reported by sponsors were:

- General information on how to rent in the UK (77%)
- Financial support (77%)
- Employment support (66%)

Difficulties experienced during scheme involvement

Current hosts were asked whether they experienced any difficulties during their involvement in the scheme. Data collected in Survey 3 showed that around 7 in 10 (72%) of hosts reported experiencing difficulties.

The difficulty most reported was uncertainty about what will happen to guests after sponsorship ends (38%), followed by difficulties when helping guests with visa applications (25%) and then sponsor application difficulties (19%).

Of the 15% of current hosts who reported difficulties helping guests register with GPs or NHS services, the most common difficulties experienced were the “availability of local services” (74%) and “appointment wait times” (35%).

Interpersonal challenges between guests and hosts

Data collected from Survey 3 showed almost 6 in 10 (58%) current hosts found aspects of hosting challenging.

A quarter (25%) of current hosts reported language barriers as a hosting challenge. Cultural differences between themselves and their guests (16%) and sharing a living space (15%) also made hosting challenging.

Satisfaction with scheme support

Data collected from Survey 3 showed that, of current hosts, previous hosts or those who have guests due to move in, over 6 in 10 (66%) are very or fairly satisfied with the overall support they were offered as a sponsor.

Data collected from Survey 2 suggests just over half of sponsors involved in the scheme were very or fairly satisfied with the management of the scheme (53%) and the communications for the scheme (52%)

Data collected from Survey 3 showed around 6 in 10 sponsors (59%) found accessing information or support regarding the Homes for Ukraine scheme very or fairly easy. This increased from 45% reported in Survey 2 data.

Data collected from Survey 3 showed of current hosts, previous hosts and those who have guests due to move in, most (91%) thought additional support would be useful for sponsors or hosts.

The types of additional support which they reported would be useful included:

- support with helping guests find employment (46%),
- support with administrative tasks for guests (45%)
- support with helping guests find their own accommodation (42%).

Cost of living pressures

Data collected from Survey 3 showed the majority (67%) of current hosts said that the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to provide support.

The most reported additional costs incurred for current hosts were utility costs, such as the cost of fixing things around the property (85%), food costs (46%) and transport costs (45%).

We hope this submission is useful for the Committee's inquiry. Please let us know if we can provide anything further.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Keoghan

Deputy National Statistician for Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics