

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
**Sent by email**

Monday, 20 March 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

## Re: One Year On – Homes for Ukraine

We are writing to you one year on from the launch of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and as we approach World Social Work Day. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) represents over 22,000 social workers across the four countries of the UK. As you will know, social workers have specific legal duties (enshrined in a variety of laws both UK-wide and nation specific) which address a range of responsibilities relating to the human rights and wellbeing of adults and children.

Social workers have considerable experience with working with refugees. For example, social workers have legal duties towards unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and many social workers also have experience of supporting first generation migrants, such as families who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Many of the Ukrainian refugees who came to the UK faced additional challenges, some had disabilities, were traumatised by war and needed access to mental health services. Social workers, alongside other professionals, have been responsible for providing vital services and support.

As you know, we wrote to you last year to highlight important matters relating to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, particularly around safeguarding, timely support, and longer-term support. A year later, we know that many Ukrainians have settled in communities and some have remained in their hosts' households whereas others have moved out into their own places. Local authorities have delivered on and above their responsibilities, and services such as health and education have stepped up to ensure Ukrainian refugees get the support that they need.

We welcome the success stories of the Government's scheme, and we are incredibly proud of the way that the British people have responded. We also recognise the strength of Ukrainian people, who have come here and contributed so much to our communities.

We have taken views from our social worker members and identified some areas for ongoing Government planning and support that we want to raise with you:

1. Resources: Ukrainians fleeing the war and their hosts face ongoing cost of living pressures, including on the cost of housing when Ukrainians seek to rent their own home. The majority of Ukrainians arriving here are women, often with children. The Government will need to

keep taking action to reduce financial hardship including through: ongoing payments to Sponsors; benefits for those who are unable to work, especially those with more than two children; support with energy bills; and action to contain the costs of private renting. There is not enough supply of rental properties, which is allowing private landlords to evict sitting tenants in favour of increasing rents. People on limited incomes such those on the Homes for Ukraine scheme are not able to keep up with soaring rents and this makes life much more difficult. We are calling for the Government to freeze evictions while the cost of living crisis rages on, to give private renters more stability.

2. **Managing risk and community cohesion:** All people fleeing conflict are at potential risk of exploitation and harm. Communities have so far proved welcoming and we understand that incidences of abuse are limited, largely because Ukrainians have had a safe route of arrival, which we applaud. There are risks within homes and communities to new arrivals and we ask that the Government continues to work closely with local authorities to manage these. For example, Ukrainians could lose control of their bank accounts, papers, earnings or benefits if hosts are unscrupulous. Social workers within and outside of local authorities are a valuable resource of advice and expertise on safeguarding, including coercive control. We invite the Government to work with BASW and with social workers to identify and prevent harm, and to ensure that Ukrainians know how to ask for help, including from social workers, when this is needed. We also ask the Government to continue the positive framing of the Ukrainian scheme and your recognition to communities for their support, in order to encourage cohesion.
3. **Access to specialist support:** Ukrainians have needed and will continue to need particular support to access universal services such as the NHS and education. All those fleeing conflict will have experiences of loss and many will have experienced trauma. Others will need access to social care. We ask the Government to review the availability of services, in particular specialist mental health services. These are already under huge pressure and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services have long waiting lists.

We trust that in considering these areas and future plans for the scheme, the Government will involve Ukrainians and draw on their experiences and insight. We would like to take this opportunity to also ask that the response to the war in Ukraine is considered as an example of the way that this country can offer welcome and opportunities to contribute to those fleeing from other conflicts, emergencies, and disasters.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Ruth Allen, CEO, BASW

Contact Officer: [Kerri.Prince@basw.co.uk](mailto:Kerri.Prince@basw.co.uk)