

Co-ordinating overview and scrutiny

Management actions

Recommendation	Individual	Service Area	Comments
<p>Section 6: BCC Support Recommendation xvii</p> <p>The Council applies the lessons of the Ukraine Response and now considers what can be applied to other groups in a coherent and equitable approach that will provide support for all refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.</p>	Stephen Philpott	Housing Solutions and Support	An objective within Housing Solutions and Support (HSSS) is to maximise access to appropriate private rented accommodation for citizens in housing need, recognising the shortfall in social housing. The Ukraine, move-on programme, is a model of households being enabled to find their own housing solutions with financial, professional and community support. A 'Find your Own' HSSS programme is being developed and rolled out to encourage and enable all households in housing need to identify their own solution, backed by the service. Not all the factors in the Ukraine scheme can be replicated and so the same ratio of success may not be achievable, however the scale of households in need is such that it may produce sufficient, valuable, outcomes. In addition the work around Early Intervention and Prevention, seeks to engage with housing options and move-on where necessary, before it is a statutory case of homelessness. This links closely with HSSS and the desire to engage early and prevent homelessness wherever possible.
	Sue Harrison	Children and Families (School Admissions)	<p>Following the recommendation made by the committee regarding school places, officers in Children and Families have reviewed the approach taken to admitting Ukrainian pupils to schools and what more could have been done to encourage and enable schools to admit these pupils.</p> <p>The School Admissions and Education Infrastructure teams within Children and Families worked with the Homes for Ukraine team to support 142 Ukrainian children to be admitted to 84 different schools across Birmingham. The teams also supported schools to access funding for children who had arrived under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.</p>

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			<p>Across the city we have a surplus of school places between 2-5% dependant on year group (this in line with DfE guidance) so have sufficient places to support families arriving into the city. However, available places may not always be at schools of preference for all families.</p> <p>Our experience was that Birmingham schools worked hard to admit pupils and support them, often before they received the DfE funding. Admission of pupils had to be done in accordance with the School Admissions Code which outlines how school places must be allocated and how waiting lists must be established.</p> <p>Schools do not normally receive additional funding for pupils from asylum seeking families and pupils can often have additional needs such as English language. There is evidence that many schools provide extra support for vulnerable families around uniform and school dinners and that some schools have also provided ESOL classes for parents, and organised community days to help to integrate newly arrived families. This was reflected in the way that schools responded when Ukrainian families arrived in Birmingham (please see additional information below regarding Schools of Sanctuary).</p> <p>The council and schools applied the same processes for admission of Ukrainian pupils as was done for arrivals from Hong Kong, Afghanistan and other refugees. Weekly meetings took place to ensure all Ukrainian pupils were offered a school place within required timescales either via direct applications to schools, the placing process or the Fair Access arrangements.</p>
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			<p>We are not aware of any schools who refused to admit a Ukrainian pupil where they were able to offer a place under the School Admissions Code. Any instances would have been challenged by the team and escalated accordingly, including to the Secretary of State if required. This is standard practice within the School Admissions team. We are aware of at least one example where a school admitted children from their waiting list to go over their published admission number and accommodate a child from Ukraine. Refugee Action appointed three members of staff to specifically support Ukrainian families with the school admission process. The dedicated caseworkers used translation services to support this work and also supported schools with identifying the pupils' needs and agreeing how best to support the pupils and their families. When moving into independent accommodation or having to change hosts, the caseworkers alongside School Admissions staff supported the families to find new schools if required.</p> <p>Feedback from the council's Refugee and Migration team was that the School Admissions team responded positively to the sudden arrival of Ukrainian children into the city. School Admissions officers participated in planning meetings, provided outreach to the hosts and Ukrainian families to support them with school application. School Admissions officers and colleagues from the Refugee and Migration teams hosted online sessions for schools to provide information about the various visa and resettlement schemes in operation, and what potential support schools might be eligible for.</p> <p>Additional information:</p>
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			<p>Birmingham's City of Sanctuary school stream is one of the biggest in the UK and schools are well engaged with this work.</p> <p><u>The most recent Schools of Sanctuary newsletter (June 2023)</u> provides information on the number of schools participating and achieving sanctuary awards.</p> <p>The Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary network also recently received recognition in the national press https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/primary-school-ophelia-birmingham-kent-mickey-mouse-b2380023.html</p> <p>Lessons learned from Ukrainian arrivals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have fully considered the recommendations in the report. • In future we will seek to establish earlier and more effective communication to host families (or equivalents in the future) to support and manage their understanding of the school admission process and its statutory requirements. • We will embed the learning from the H4U scheme re admissions and consider the same approach to be applied as appropriate for all asylum seekers and refugee children.
	Ilgun Yusuf	Birmingham Adult Education Service	<p>To support a more co-ordinated Birmingham-wide response it would be even more impactful if WMCA share (in real-time) with BCC information of refugees already enrolled on ESOL programmes with all providers funded by the Adult Education Budget.</p>

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