

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 4/10/22

Title: Homes for Ukrainians: Welcome Centre

Purpose of the report: To provide information and assurance that Ceredigion County Council provided appropriate set-up support and day-to-day wrap-around support for the Welcome Centre at Gwersyll yr Urdd, Llangrannog

For: Information

Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member: Cllr Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation

Report

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched by the UK Government on 14 March 2022. This scheme allows people living in the UK to sponsor a named Ukrainian national or family to come to live in the UK with them, providing they have suitable accommodation to offer. In addition to this, Welsh Government announced its intention to be a 'Super Sponsor' to establish a quicker and safer route for displaced people from Ukraine to come to the UK. It removes the need for applicants to be matched with a host before being given permission to travel to the UK since they are, in essence, being sponsored directly by Welsh Government. Welcome Centres have been established across Wales to provide initial support and accommodation to Ukrainian families before they move on to accommodation in the community with hosts or in the private rental sector.

The Urdd Gobaith Cymru Gwersyll at Llangrannog was selected as the location for the first Welcome Centre in Wales. Ceredigion Council were asked by Welsh Government to work with the Urdd and partners to establish the facility, provide the wrap-around care for refugees at the Centre, and manage aspects of the licence agreement between WG and Urdd Gobaith Cymru. Specific funding for this work is provided by the Welsh Government.

A multi-agency Delivery group was established to bring together key services and stakeholders involved in the project. These meetings were initially chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and later by the CLO for Policy, Performance and Public Protection. The membership of the forum included representatives from local and national stakeholders including Welsh Government, Ceredigion County Council, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Cytûn, Public Health Wales, Dyfed Powys Police, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and others.

The Delivery group ensured that the Welcome Centre was established in a quick and effective manner and that proper arrangements were in place. This included assistance from all Council services and ranged from IT support (to improve

reception), to finance and legal support, through to business administration. The Delivery group succeeded in its aims and ensured that partnership working was smooth and effective and provided a means to overcome obstacles as they were identified.

The Ceredigion Welcome Centre opened on the 28/03/22.

Ceredigion County Council's Partnerships and Performance team undertook the registration and data management side of the project at the site and also managed a team of four staff, to ensure that all families received high-quality wrap-around support. Our wrap-around support staff were seconded from the Public Protection Contact Tracing team and from Porth Cymorth Cynnar and Porth Gofal services. The Schools Service provided on-site education provision for school-aged children and the Porth Cymorth Cynnar service provided childcare for preschool children. Hywel Dda University Health Board carried out health screening on all new arrivals and arranged GP allocation. English classes were provided by Coleg Ceredigion and Adult Learning Wales.

Urdd Gobaith Cymru provided accommodation, catering, transport and activities, along with assisting many of the families to secure temporary employment. They also worked in tandem with the Council's Wrap-around support team to support individuals.

DWP were present on-site to process benefit applications in bulk and facilitated video interviews for job seekers.

Outcomes

The seamless working across organisational boundaries had a very positive impact, as all staff and agencies worked to achieve the best possible outcomes for residents. The fact that the Welcome Centre was established and ready to operate within a matter of days is a testament to the willingness and hard work of staff across all agencies. A steady stream of refugees arrived on almost a daily basis in the first 2 months, almost all of them family units, and many without their menfolk, who remained in their homeland.

The main purpose of the Council's work was to provide wrap-around support to Ukrainian families during their stay at the Welcome Centre and then to assist with WG move-on plans.

The following outcomes were achieved:

- Refugees were greeted on arrival to the Centre and initial registration and identity verification undertaken
- Initial health and safety induction was undertaken
- Welcome Packs were provided
- Identified health or well-being issues were immediately escalated to Health colleagues for assessment
- The opening of Bank accounts was facilitated for all families
- Professional on-site interpretation and translation Services and access to out-of-hours telephone interpretation services were set up
- Cultural orientation and information briefings sessions were regularly delivered

- Registration of biometric details with the Home Office and administration of Biometric Residence Permits was delivered
- Important off-site appointments were scheduled
- Applications for National Insurance Numbers were successful
- 3 hours per day of formal education for school age children was delivered on site, as was up to 2 hours per day of early years education
- Ninety-two Ukrainian children attended formal education in all, split across 4 classes
- Up to ten members of staff were involved in delivering education, including 4 qualified teachers
- English / Welsh tuition for Speakers of Other Languages for residents at the Welcome Centre was delivered
- Move-on travel arrangements were put in place along with Welsh Government and other Local Authorities to ensure arrival at accommodation placements
- Local community and faith leaders were involved to ensure cultural and faith needs were met, including activities delivery by local voluntary organisations
- All 250 residents moved on to various locations across Wales
- Five families transferred to Ceredigion Hosts and 1 family moved to a private rental property in Ceredigion

Conclusion

The Ceredigion Welcome Centre closed on the 31/8/22 in order that the Urdd could return the site to its primary function. The Welcome Centre was in place for four months and brought about positive experiences for very vulnerable people. The integrated and seamless way that agencies worked together was the leading factor in the success of this project and 72 Ukrainian families will be forever grateful for the support and compassion that was extended to them in Ceredigion. Most were worried about their families in Ukraine, their future, how they would be able to find a job in this country and secure permanent accommodation. They were also very concerned about getting their children into school. We received consistent feedback that the Urdd and Council staff at the Welcome Centre were helpful, friendly, and always there to help. They valued the quality of the accommodation, felt safe and that the help with obtaining key UK documents was invaluable to them. Some stated that they were in tears when they arrived from Ukraine and were in tears when they left Llangrannog, having received such excellent care and support.

Wellbeing of Future Generations:	Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why	Not required as this report is not for decision.
	Summary: Long term: Collaboration: Involvement: Prevention: Integration:	

Recommendation(s): To note the work undertaken by the Council and partners in assisting families at Llangrannog that arrived fleeing war in Ukraine.

Reasons for decision:

Overview and Scrutiny: This report was specifically requested by Cabinet.

Policy Framework: Refugee resettlement. On the 3/3/22 Council supported welcoming refugees from Ukraine to the County in the future and gave authority to Officers to make suitable arrangements at the appropriate time.

Corporate Priorities: Creating caring and healthy communities
Providing the best start in life and learning for all ages

Finance and Procurement implications: Ceredigion can claim its costs in setting up and supporting the Welcome Centre from Welsh Government.

Legal Implications: None

Staffing implications: Staff costs can be claimed

Property / asset implications: None for the Council

Risk(s): All risks were successfully managed at partnership level

Statutory Powers: Not applicable

Background Papers: Welsh Government Letter of thanks to Urdd_Ceredigion_Hywel Dda UHB

Appendices: None

Corporate Lead Officer: Alun Williams, Policy, Performance and Public Protection

Reporting Officers: Cathryn Morgan and Diana Davies

Date: 16/9/22

Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AS/MS
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales

Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Bryan Davies, Leader, Ceredigion County Council
Sian Lewis, Chief Executive, Urdd Gobaith Cymru
Maria Battle, Chair, Hywel Dda University Health Board

26 September 2022

Dear colleagues

We want to express my heartfelt thanks on behalf of my Government for your incredible support and the exceptional hard work of your officers over the last few months. Your organisations have played a critical role in ensuring Wales could live up to our ambition of being a Nation of Sanctuary. The Llangrannog Welcome Centre was our first and flagship Welcome Centre, acting as a symbol of an extraordinary warm Welsh welcome to our new Ukrainian friends. Your efforts have demonstrated the truly Team Wales approach which is now characteristic in our joint effort to support people seeking sanctuary. Through partnership we have collectively allowed many families to seek safety in Wales and equip them with the support they needed to start a new life here. We would not have been able to achieve that without the dedicated work of your teams.

Ceredigion Council have played a critical role as an essential partner, with the challenges of setting up the first Welcome Centre for Ukrainians in Wales and overcoming new unforeseen challenges in unprecedented times. You have risen to this challenge admirably overcoming all obstacles. Providing excellent wraparound support service and case work, was at the core of what we wanted to achieve, and Ceredigion Council has achieved fantastic results. We are delighted that you are continuing to support us in helping Ukrainians who arrived through the Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Schemes, along with those who have already moved on into more long-term accommodation within Ceredigion.

We would like to thank Urdd Gobaith Cymru, for your organisation's remarkable continued support in our Nation of Sanctuary efforts. We were delighted to work with the Urdd to

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

pioneer this approach in support of our Afghan friends a year ago and it says everything about the commitment of the organisation to humanitarian purpose that you were prepared to help us yet again. We know the disruption that operating as a Welcome Centre causes to the schools and children who look forward to breaks away with you, so we thank you for your continued support.

We also want to pay tribute to Hywel Dda Health Board for your officers' can-do attitude despite the short-notice nature of what we proposed not too long after the incredible disruption which was caused locally by the Home Office with the Penally army training camp. Whilst what we proposed was very different to the Home Office approach, the Health Board were very quick to design an effective approach to supporting Welcome Centre guests which other health boards across Wales have learned from. We recognise the staffing pressures that the NHS is under, and I am thankful for the hard work that you put in to meet the needs of the Ukrainians locally. Thank you for finding solutions when it was equally possible to find barriers to providing effective care.

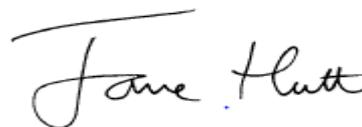
When I visited Llangrannog it was clear to see the impact each of your organisation had made through the gratitude of the residents and the joy of children. It was brilliant to see children singing in Welsh and learning about Welsh life and culture. No matter how long they spend in Wales, we are sure that the time spent in the Urdd will stay with them as a precious memory for the rest of their lives. During our visit a young boy staying at the Centre described to us what it was like being here in Wales in safety by pointing to the sky and simply saying, "no rockets in the sky" – that is what you have delivered for him and many others. Thank you for playing such an important part in supporting people in such difficult circumstances.

We hope that this process has been a positive experience despite the operational challenges the proposal created. As ever, there is always a wide cast list who made something like this possible and it is not always possible to thank everyone directly. Please share our thanks with all of your officers and partners who made this a reality. We are proud that you have helped towards writing an important chapter in the history of modern Wales as a compassionate, globally responsible nation.

Yours sincerely



Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AS/MS
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales



Jane Hutt AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice