



Bob Blackman MP
Member of Parliament for Harrow East
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7082

Felicity Buchan MP
Minister for Housing and Homelessness
Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

20th February 2023

Dear Minister,

As Co-Chairs, cross-party officers and parliamentary supporters of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Ending Homelessness, we are writing to raise our concerns about the worrying rise of homelessness amongst Ukrainian refugees living in Britain.

Last month the APPG for Ending Homelessness held a meeting to discuss this concerning issue as we approach a year since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which, with over 7 million refugees recorded to date, amounts to the biggest humanitarian crisis Europe has seen since WWII. We heard from people with lived experience and charity and local authority representatives who have been supporting Ukrainian arrivals to the UK about the challenges they are facing as gaps in support and the cost of living crisis is pushing more people into homelessness.

The Government's response to this conflict, including the introduction of three visa-based schemes to support Ukrainians seeking safety in the UK, was welcomed by attendees. Together these schemes have successfully helped refugees find safety and sanctuary after fleeing their country, with over 161,400 Ukrainians with visas arriving in the UK since March 2022. The most recent financial support package of £650 million announced by the Government in December is also very encouraging and continues the long and proud history of the UK providing a safe home to those who have been forced to flee due to conflict.

Constituency Office:

209, Headstone Lane, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 6ND 020-8421-3323
bobblackman.org.uk facebook.com/bobblackmanofficial twitter.com/BobBlackman

However, in the midst of the cost of living crisis there are growing concerns that increasing numbers of Ukrainian arrivals are facing homelessness or destitution. In a survey with Ukrainian refugees, the Work Rights Centre found that they face acute risks of homelessness and poverty, with 1 in 10 being threatened with eviction at some point in their stay in the UK, and two thirds having little confidence in their ability to find private rented accommodation, due to high rents, deposits and barriers such as the need for guarantors.

This is reflected in official statistics published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which found that a total of 4,295 Ukrainian households have received homelessness assistance from their local authority between February 2022 and January 2023. This is based on voluntary data from 72% of English local authorities and provides only a partial picture of the true scale of homelessness faced by this refugee community.

During the APPG for Ending Homelessness' meeting it was clear that attendees welcomed the Government's response to the conflict last year but felt further action was necessary to ensure that refugees could access a safe and secure home and did not have to face homelessness.

There was consensus that there were multiple ways the design of funding and financial support could be improved to prevent homelessness amongst this group. Panellists called for financial support to be made more flexible, for example, to include lodging arrangements, which now fall outside the scope of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and crucially for support to be extended to those under the Ukraine Family Scheme. This is particularly important given that Work Rights Centre research found more than twice as many Ukrainians under the Family Scheme were at imminent risk of eviction than those under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This may be due to the lack of financial support which forces Ukrainians and their family members to rely on their own financial resources to get by. Panellists also noted that the financial support hosts receive does not vary according to the size of the family sponsored, which could drive the breakdown of living arrangements in the longer term.

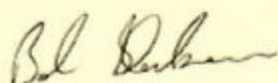
Similarly, there were strong calls for the Government to learn lessons from recent humanitarian crises and bring forward a new strategy for refugee integration and resettlement, to allow for a better coordinated response in the future. This must include appointing a successor to Lord Harrington as Minister of State for Refugees to acknowledge the UK's commitment to improving conditions for refugees in the UK.

We very much share the Government's commitment to tackling homelessness and feel that supporting Ukrainian refugees during the cost of living crisis and beyond is an important part of this. We believe no Ukrainian who has found refuge in the UK after fleeing the devastating conflict at home should experience homelessness and be left without a safe place to live here.

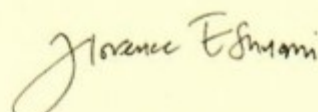
We urge you to consider the policy recommendations put forward by these leading sector experts and continue working constructively with the APPG for Ending Homelessness, so we can work together to make sure homelessness amongst Ukrainian refugees living in Britain is prevented wherever possible and resolved quickly if it does happen.

We look forward to hearing from you on the Government's plans to continue to support and protect Ukrainian refugees going forward.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Blackman MP



Florence Eshalomi MP

Co-Chairs of the APPG for Ending Homelessness

Ben Everitt MP, *Vice-Chair of the APPG for Ending Homelessness*

Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill, *Vice-Chair of the APPG for Ending Homelessness*

Stephen Timms MP, *Vice Chair of APPG for Ending Homelessness*

Caroline Lucas MP, *Member of the APPG for Ending Homelessness*

Helen Morgan MP, *Member of the APPG for Ending Homelessness*

Debbie Abrahams MP

Lord Alton of Liverpool

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

Lord Bethell

Olivia Blake MP

Peter Bottomley MP

Ben Bradshaw MP

Sir Graham Brady MP

Baroness Bull CBE

Richard Burgon MP

Baroness Burt of Solihull

Dan Carden MP

Lord Cashman CBE

Wendy Chamberlain MP

Sarah Champion MP

The Rt Hon Dame Rosie Winterton MP

Marsha de Cordova MP

Allan Dorans MP

Peter Dowd MP

Colum Eastwood MP

Baroness Eaton DBE DL

Stephen Farry MP

Marion Fellows MP

Margaret Ferrier MP

Barry Gardiner MP

Lord German OBE

Jo Gideon MP

Emma Hardy MP

Baroness Harris of Richmond DL

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Baroness Ludford

Angus MacNeil MP

Baroness Masham of Ilton DL

Rachael Maskell MP

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