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Transcript

OK, really good to see so many faces and thank you for coming into this meeting at such short notice.

This is one of two meetings that are our first official briefings to what, as a diocese in conjunction with partners, we're trying to do, which is to bring Ukrainians over to the UK and to seek refuge and to be hosted with you as the host family.

You will all have seen the shocking facts and the shocking figures that are out there. We know that now there's more than 3.6 million people who fled to Ukraine because of the Russian invasion. We know that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called it the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two.

Most of those refugees have fled to Poland and other nearby countries, but so far only about 15,000 visas have been issued by the UK so far. Part of that is we've been relatively slow to respond, and but also there's a need to join dots up.

We want to talk you through the process of what the government has done so far and how we think working with our partners which are Citizens UK as a lead partner and other partners that they have relationships with, we can sort of plug the gaps where what the government's plan isn't working terribly well. So this evening there's going to be a lot of information. We're recording it so that you can watch it all again later and digest it.

We're also putting lots of links [on the website](#) and I will be available to answer any questions above and beyond this meeting, as will Hannah, who's also on this call and she's going to have a chat with you in a moment.

We've asked some people along to input into the meeting, including two people who are experienced hosts of refugees just to give you, you know, the reality check, but also the positives and the things you need to think about in hosting people in your own home and what we're going to do is we're going to present the information to you and then have a question and answer session at the end. So what I would suggest you do is as we go through firstly the government scheme then Citizens UK who are our lead partner scheme and then the diocesan evolving plan that you write down any questions that you might want to ask and we will deal with them all at the end and so that you know you get your information first.

What I'm going to do is, I'm going to hand over to Hannah, who's our social justice advisor in the diocese and Hannah is going to talk you through what's happening with the government so far.

And then we'll pick up on how we think we can make things work.

And so you will probably already have heard about the homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme that has been launched by the government, and that's been made to bring across the Ukrainian refugees

to the UK and with the proviso that they have a sponsor and they provide accommodation and welcome them.

So at the moment it's only possible to sponsor Ukrainian refugees as individuals, but the next phase will probably be to help organisations and charities and businesses to act as sponsors too, but for now it is just individuals.

What is happening? At the moment we've got the potential hosts needing to register with the UK Government on the homes for Ukraine site and then what will happen after that is hosts then need to identify a Ukrainian family or individual who wants to come to the UK.

Currently the government is not matching refugees with hosts, so anyone who wants to be a sponsor must have a named guest.

Next, once that's happened, each Ukrainian wanting to come will have to apply for a visa and complete all the forms along with the host family, and that application can't be made before they know who's sponsoring them.

At this point, when the application is completed, there will be basic police report checks, police checks done by the government on both the host and the guests.

And once that has all gone through the local authority will then have a statutory duty to do home cheques and DBS cheques on all of the hosts so that is any adult household members. Anyone over 18.

So then, once that happens and the Ukrainian families or individuals are brought over to the UK, then the sponsored Ukrainians can stay in the UK initially for six months, but that can be extended to up to three years, and that means that they can.

Work, they can claim benefits and they can access things like schools and the NHS.

It will be the responsibility of the sponsor to help travel for the the refugees and and also support along with the wider community, any things like applying for benefits, schools, registering for GPS.

You've probably also heard that host families.

Will receive 300 and.

£50 per month from the UK.

And that's one payment per household, so it's not for individuals hosted in for number of guests. It's per household that will be £350, and it's to go towards the costs associated with helping out the refugees arriving.

Will also receive 200 pounds straight away before they're able to claim benefits and work.

We're not quite sure how that will happen yet, but their government are working. The local authority. Actually, I think rather than the government, the local authority are working on how that will happen and and last I heard it's probably going to be through cash or through prepaid prepaid payment cards.

So if we move on to the next slide.

You'll see that red box around two of those things that I've just mentioned, and so this is the support that we need to make this process happen. And identifying a Ukrainian individual family and the application process itself. I've heard that it's quite long and.

And some people do need that support, and so this is where Citizens UK our partners come in. So I'm going to hand back to Liz and and she's she's going to play the video, I think.

I am yeah fantastic.

Right?

Thank you very much, Hannah and.

So Citizens UK is an organisation that as a diocese of Oxford is working in partnership with and they're working in partnership with them to find ways of addressing poverty and inequality issues that we all face in our parishes and their relationships. Been going for just over a year.

Momentum is being gained and lots and lots of good and encouraging work is happening, but this is a really big test of how we can use that partnership that we've developed and that we've invested in to do something in response.

To an emergency.

And Citizens UK.

They have got.

A proposal and that proposal is that they want us as a strategic partner to help them resettle 1000 refugees by Easter and.

And they've got lots of partners with organisations on the ground in Eastern Europe and in the UK to help them achieve that.

I did an interview a little bit earlier with Jonathan Cox, who's the chief executive of Citizens UK.

He has currently got COVID and he's looking after a family with COVID as well, so we recorded it early on so that he could do the childcare this evening.

So I'm going to play our interview. It's about 10 minutes long and in it he talks about what it is that Citizens UK are hopefully going to do and.

How we can play a part in in that as Oxford ISIS? So Emma? If you don't hear any sound will you tell me? I think it should work but let's see how it goes.

Jonathan, can you tell me?

Something about what citizens?

UK are planning to do and why.

Thanks Liz, yeah and real. Apologies to everybody for not being able to be with you this evening. There's there's five reasons that Citizens UK are stepping into this space and why we're encouraging work with strategic partners like the Diocese of Oxford and why we're really grateful that you're amongst one of the first to step forward.

And there are 5 S. Is that hopefully be easy to remember. The first is is safety.

Uhm, there there are very few safeguards around this scheme currently with homes for Ukraine, that makes it very easy for people to access, but there have been legitimate concerns raised about safety, both for refugees and safety. For for sponsors and hosts.

And so we want to add more safeguards at a safer process around around the government. One, almost like a kind of.

Additional bit of scaffolding.

To to help the the second S is we want the the we want the scheme to achieve scale.

We've been working.

On community sponsorship. For other nationalities, for a number of years.

You know, and the numbers involved have been very, very small because it's a very bureaucratic process for going about.

It and now we don't have that bureaucratic process. So suddenly I've got thousands of.

People wanting to be involved, which is.

Great, but it'll only work if we're able to find Ukrainians who want to come to the UK and so one of the things that we're doing with our strategic partners is to try and build pledges to get 1000 places for Ukrainians in the UK, ready in time for Easter so that we can then go and link to organisations in the region who are overwhelmed.

At the minute supporting refugees in Poland in Moldova and Romania in western parts of you.

Train to then try and bring people over on mass 'cause there's a real risk that all people goodwill gets wasted because they all signed up on the government portal.

But there's no government mechanism for finding them Ukrainian refugees. They'll all be down to the Ukrainians and that that put themselves forward, or where you have Connexions. So citizens are seeking to operate in that.

Face to help achieve scale.

So the third is speed. We want to be able to turn this around quickly because the need is so profound and so immediate, and that, again, is why we're looking to work through larger organisations that can support people on the ground to move quickly and to get rid of some of the barriers or some of the delays in.

The system the 4th S is sustainable.

Pretty so you'll probably know that this scheme requires sponsors to commit to six months to support a family or or an individual. I think as we look at the situation now.

So all.

Our prayers and all our desires for its to come to a swift, peaceful resolution don't look like they're gonna be.

Answered particularly quickly.

And our suspicion is that in six months, for the people who come, it isn't necessarily gonna be safe for them to return. So we need to be starting with the idea in mind that our community is not necessarily individual.

Most sponsors, but the communities into which the Ukrainian refugees arrive are prepared to be able to support their resettlement for a longer period of time, if that's required.

As that sustainability factor is really important, we don't wanna get to a .6 months down the line where suddenly it's like.

Well, what do we do next? And there's nowhere for these Ukrainians to go and no kind of support. We think they're going to look at a.

Longer amount of.

Time and the final S is that we want to improve the level of support that is available, particularly to sponsors, and we think we can.

Best deliver that by working in collaboration with strategic partners like the Diocese of Oxford. Because we can deploy our resources and our training.

Uhm, well in relation to 2020 strategic partners who in turn could be getting 50 people each if we're trying to support 200 groups individually in the UK to resettle that same 1000 people, that's just gonna exhaust our staff and and and they're gonna burn.

Out so we want to make sure that it's good support provided.

In the best way of doing that.

We think is to build capacity within strategic partners like the DIASYS, so that can be cascaded down to local parishes and groups on the ground. So those the 5S is and kind of why we're engaged in this space.

That's fantastic, thank you very much for that. One of the questions I think people will ask is whilst we're doing cheques here and safeguarding here, what are the cheques that will be done on the people coming into their homes from Ukraine?

That's a great question, so the formal Home Office key, sorry, keep saying Home Office 'cause the Home Office normally do this, but it's department of levelling up Michael got which Michael Gove runs which has response.

Ability for the community hosting side of of of of this the Home Office will do the cheques on the refugee who come so they will have to submit that they'll have to get a visa essentially.

And now there are very liberal and generous terms for those diseases. Currently. I mean basically, if you're if you are a Ukrainian or if you were resident.

At Ukraine from the 1st of January 2022, you're likely to be eligible. They will then do some tests just to cheque. They're on security reasons why that person might not be a good person to to to to house as a as a refugee, but that will kind of mostly.

And be be it in terms of cheques from the UK side. Local authorities will be resourced to do some kind of light touch checking in after the refugees have arrived, but I wouldn't hold our breath waiting for that to be particularly proactive.

I think that we'll be dealing with the most extreme that kind of kind of difficulties or.

Cases and what we want to do.

UM is build relationships with organisations that operate in the.

And that are working face to face with refugees in and around Ukraine and to work with them on developing some safeguarding and and and vetting procedures there.

And that go on top of this so that we actually know a little bit about the.

People who are.

Coming before they arrive, and that's not because I think.

That they're likely to be a great threat.

Uh, or a huge risk. I think it's more likely that we want to that it would be to find out a bit more about who they are and what they're looking for and for us then to be able to match them to an appropriate sponsor and and and host. And based on their needs and interests and and and what support they may need.

That's brilliant, thank you.

Very much, and when we actually.

Have the people on the ground in Eastern Europe who are ready to come over here they'll be getting support with their visa applications and and the paperwork side of things come from their point.

That's that's the hope I mean. At the minute there is no again at the government scheme. There is no support for that currently.

It's literally you know, down to the refugee to be able to get here once the visa has been granted, but already we're hearing that people have had difficulties filling in forms.

What we would like to be doing and just this week, we've decided to to hire in a Ukrainian speaker.

Uhm, who's based in the UK to help?

With things like language and translation and helping people to be able to access the forms and support to do that, I don't think the forms are as complicated and as has been the case for things like community sponsorship, which which have been very lengthy.

But no doubt that there will be a barrier to some people, and so we need to make sure that we're doing all we.

Can to reduce those barriers and that is better done frankly, kind of in the region.

However, it's amazing what we can do via zoom now, so that could also be, you know, kind of mass visa writing sessions where we have Ukrainian speakers talking people.

Through it as they do.

It so we.

Can think of cleverly about how we leverage technology.

The other thing to say this is that we are moving into the unknown here. We just don't know how exactly this is going to work, and we want to work closely with strategic partners and hosts on the ground to learn from their wisdom and experience.

And already people are are doing this scheme on their own to some degree, but also to pool our wisdom.

Our resources so that we come up with the most efficient way of doing it, and we're not having everybody kind of reinventing the wheel.

Fantastic and Jonathan just one final thing. How optimistic do you feel about hitting this target of 1000 refugees by Easter?

I'm really optimistic about the fact that we will hit our uh, thousand offers because as we know the you know, the British public is being very generous already and through our strategic partners, we're already above 500 and with more coming in every day. So I'm confident. Hopefully by the end of this week that we'll hit around the.

1000 mark. In terms of recruiting the Ukrainians and we've been having conversations this week with.

Charities on the grounds who are working directly with Ukrainians and their view is that there would definitely be demand for this.

The problem at the moment is the Ukrainians don't know that this is on offer and that in terms of coming to the UK.

We're not very high up the list, partly because we're geographically with the furthest away from of the sort of organisations sort of countries that are offering help.

Rather, and we're not part of the EU anymore, so that to make a political point. But there's a practical point there, because most of the other European countries are making a common offer through the EU, and that's what's known about, and that's what's being communicated.

And the UK Government has put no resource currently into kind of communicating or advertising this tu tu tu tu Ukrainian.

And and then also, you know, lots of Ukrainians may well want to stay, you know fairly within the region they are likely to have linguistic or cultural or even family ties in the countries around, and because often the men are being left behind and they may not want to move too far. However, having said that.

And the scale of the crisis is so fast that finding 1000 who want to come, I don't think will be difficult.

And it's just a case of there will be that thousand there that we just need to find them.

And then in terms of by Easter.

I'm I'm confident again that we can make the the the set up work on our side that is civil society side.

It will require government to make sure that they process the applications and process the visas quickly and they promised to do so and I have no reason to disbelieve.

Them in regard to that promise. However, we don't know for sure whether they will fully be able to deliver that.

Deliver that on time so.

I yes, I'm confident that we can do our bit. Yes, I'm confident there's a need. And yes, I'm confident the government intends to do it within that timescale. Whether all of those things come together. Given the pioneering nature of this work.

You know, I I'm I'm confident, quietly confident, but I don't want to be naive about it.

There you know there's very many challenges we gotta get through.

John, thank you very much. That was really helpful. Thank you.

Very much indeed.

So we got a grasp of what the government scheme is that's in place at the moment we understand that citizens UK are a strategic partner in helping us join those dots up and bring Ukrainians over from from the war zone that they're in at the moment to the UK, where they will be.

In safety and.

As diasys, there's task.

Group A small.

Group of us that have been asked to pull together a strategy to make this work.

So what I'm going to do now is just talk through with you what it is the diagnosis are bringing to the table on this and and you obviously as as part of the dice. This fit into this so.

We want to work in partnership with Citizens UK and we want.

To offer sanctuary to at.

Least 50 refugees in Oxford diocese if possible. As Jonathan said before Easter.

In order to achieve that, we will need to register the hosts and that's why you're here, because you registered and and we will act with Citizens UK to then match you with refugees who are looking for support and entry into the UK.

Once that matching process has taken place as a as a diasys as a strategic partner, we want to make sure that you as hosts and they as refugees are supported really, really well and looked after certainly for and hopefully beyond the six months that they're able to stay in the UK.

We'll do this in a number of.

Ways so in terms of registration, you've registered through the DICIS online and.

You've probably also.

Registered with the government as a potential sponsor.

I think it's probably quite important you do that because once we make the application the visa application, that's where the government in theory is going to join the dots.

And that's where the the payment of £350 and and the financing to resource the the refugee comes in as well.

So if you have only.

Registered online with the dicis. I think it's.

A good idea also to register with the government.

Once that's happened, you'll receive an email from us and you may have already received it, asking you for a little bit more information about the accommodation.

You can offer that.

So that we can accurately match those people who will be coming over with the hosts. So if you've got one bedroom or two bedrooms, and if you've got.

Access that would be suitable for someone with disabilities, and if you're more able to cater for children than other people, that's the sort of thing that we will need to know.

And then we.

Would begin the safer recruitment process as you are more than aware people coming over as refugees, particularly women and children, are vulnerable people and we want to make sure that they are safeguarded as they possibly can. The local authority will have a statutory duty that the government has passed down.

To them to do certain safeguarding cheques and we're going to go over that a little bit more later.

On but they will do a home cheque on all the accommodation. It's probably not going to happen until after the refugees have moved in, but they will have a window shortly after they've moved in to do a home cheque.

I say it's not gonna happen till after they've moved in, because logistically I think they're going to be really challenged to do it beforehand.

They will also want to do a DBZ cheque.

On all people over 18 in the household to make sure that there's no reason why vulnerable people shouldn't be placed in the household.

As we're recruiting you as volunteers on behalf of the DICIS, it's very likely we'll also ask you by email to do a confidential declaration to declare anything that might come up on the BS and anything that we need to know about, and also possibly ask you for one referee who can vouch that your people who are suitable to have refugees.

In their house.

So that that's something that we hope we will be able to begin outside of it fairly soon, and then as soon as the matching process has taken place, it's over to the local authority to do the more formal cheque.

And we'll also do a briefing with you and that's what this evening is largely about, and what we're going to be briefing out is things about housing people safely, safeguarding issues, some good practise, some challenges, and dealing with problems. So this is a sort of stage we're at right now. The next step.

Is to identify a lead contact in each Deanery because if we have someone locally, they're more able to respond to problems and needs than than just one person.

In the centre.

And we need to identify churches that are able to act as support centres. We know there's a number of churches in our diocese that are already.

Really good at supporting people who are refugees and people who are asylum seekers and the local population in general who are in poverty.

So churches where there already are the skills.

For people to.

Help signing on to benefits.

And registering with GP and registering with schools.

We'll offer training to those volunteers to offer immediate support, and again we've got the signing onto benefits for registering with the GP, etc, but that's the sort of training that you might need, and we're not necessarily asking the hosts to do that, although you may have those skills at what we'd like to do is make sure there's a local centre.

Where where we can make sure that that's done.

Uhm, in in each Deanery and then there may be additional things that we need to look.

At and we're we're sort of exploring.

This at the moment.

Which is, you know, some sort of welcome pack, some sort of.

Initial get you.

Started until any money comes through from the Gov.

Meant to help support the people so packs of toiletries and basics welcome food and things like that, and they're the sort of things that our Deanery leads will be able to look at.

Then what we do is we register those people who have offered non host support. We've got lots of people who said that they can help support you in the hosting of refuge.

Jeez, they've registered online and what we're in the process of doing now is identifying and assessing the skills that they've got.

So if we discover we've got lots of people with skills in benefits or in accessing school places or in helping people with English, that's the sort of thing that we're looking for. We'll also hopefully be able to identify the.

Signory support and administrators from that as well.

Where appropriate for those people, we'll need to do a safer recruitment process, as I've already outlined, and then next week after we've done our briefing with you hosts, we'll do a briefing with the non host support to begin to get them lined up and ready to support this prod.

Then the matching begins and this is where Citizens UK and other global partners will work to identify Ukrainian refugees that want to come over to the United Kingdom and they'll let us know who they've identified locally. At Oxford ISIS, we will be matching these hosts, the hosts.

And based on the information you've given us with the refugees and and.

At that point.

As a sponsor you will need to complete an application form with the refugee to be able to bring them over and again, that's where we're hoping to get some support.

In as well.

For some people, and it's online. For some people it's going to be easier and some people it's going to be harder. But with Citizens UK and and oxidises the the aim is to offer as much support in getting.

That essential document that then gives them the visa to come over done at that point. Then the refugee application for the visa should go through based on the information that they've supplied, and you should also know at that point if and who you're likely to receive as a guest.

We're then getting ready to welcome the refugees and they will travel, supported by Citizens UK to the UK and we need to work out who's going to welcome them to the point that they're dropped off.

It's likely to be by coach, but we're not sure yet and some of the non host support will be able to help with transport and travel.

So if you're a host that doesn't.

Have a car that's.

OK, we should be able to sort that out.

Not your. Your guests can be met and taken to your accommodation. And then we've got two or three days when we need to get some essential registration paperwork done.

The first piece of paper work we need to do is get them signed on to benefits so that they've got some income and also that will give them a National Insurance.

Number as well.

And it's really important. We then get them registered with a GP, and if there's children we need to identify school places and get them registered there to the education department of the diocese are going to help us with that.

So we hope that we've got some some good support to do that initial registration. That makes life a little bit.

Easier for people.

Because it can take a little while for benefits to come through. We know it will take a little while for benefits to come through.

The government has said that they will make a payment of £200 to each refugee to get them through the first few weeks of getting food and and the sort of essential things that they need. And if you, as hosts find that that's something they're really struggling.

Web then we we need to look to the non host supporters to be able to resource whatever support you need to be able to make sure you know they're comfortable.

Post welcome, there'll be a settling in period and we'd like to be able to give them an orientation to learn in the UK.

A lot of that's going to be about.

How you welcome.

Them and help how you orientate them to your local area. But what we would like to try and do is host at a local church or centre some sort of welcome event.

That that helps them to understand what it's like living in the United King.

And maybe at that time identify support needs.

It also allows.

Different Ukrainians to come.

Together and and know who's nearby, who, who they may.

Know and who, who will speak their language as well.

We'd hope that we'd also be able to do another social event so week one and week two and three, a social event to bring refugees and hosts.

Together for mutual.

Support probably around geographical areas.

Week three and week six. A call or a zoom to cheque. Everything OK and the placement is working and we're going to talk a little bit later on about when things don't work, but you can expect as a host to have that call.

It may geographically be possible to do a visit as well, but just to cheque that everything is OK with you as a host and everything is OK.

With your guests as well.

And then the ongoing support is really, really important.

This is all a work in progress, but the hope is we'll have a Deanery lead who's available to support and link with diocesan support and other support groups and.

And we're working with Citizens UK and local churches to identify what they are.

The project coordinators, which at the moment is Hannah and myself, will be available to.

Support you as.

Well, we have already as a dicis, got online English lessons set up and employability support.

Let's set up, which is what we did as we welcomed Hongkongers over the last year or so. So we've got that available for people.

To engage with, but we also know that there's English lessons and employability support locally within communities, so there will be Connexions there as well.

I will also provide you with an emergency support number if if things are very difficult and you feel that.

You need to get in touch with someone immediately.

Just in case there's problems and we'll talk a little bit more. As I said about what they might be, we're going to try and identify some accommodation that's set aside for emergency or problem rests.

Fight there, there's all sorts of things could go wrong. So if we need to move a family out temporarily, if there's a particular problem we want to have some accommodation set aside that.

Will allow us to do that.

And allocated emergency accommodation in case the placement.

Breaks down, so as we work out where the best place for hosts are, we'll also probably be identifying some people who might be able to offer that emergency support so that we don't leave anybody homeless and stranded, or people feeling vulnerable.

In their own home.

And then finally, after six months, your formal commitment to the refugee ends.

And there's an option to continue to support or to help them into independent living, or to help them back to Ukraine.

Depending on the political situation, but we recognise you need a lot of support in this as well and we will need to be working with local authorities to work out what the move on is and by then we will have a much better idea of.

What the long term need of the refugees are who have come to the UK at the moment? There's an emergency short term need.

But by six months?

If people are still here, we we need to know.

What we can do to help them?

And there's also the option to support another refugee at the end of those six months. That's the plan. There's a lot of work to do in that, and you are the first step in that what we want to do is make sure that you've got lots and lots of information so that at the end of this session today.

You feel very sure.

About the steps that you're taking.

So I'm going to hand back over to Hannah and I'm going to stop sharing.

And Hannah, I think you're going to have a conversation with two people who are experienced hosts or people who are refugees or seeking asylum.

Absolutely thank you so much Liz. That was really thorough, but it was a lot of information so we're changing tack a little bit now and.

We've got some stories.

So first of all, we're going to hear from Allison, and then we're going to hear from Jill, and both of them have experience working with refugees and hosting people, UM?

So first of.

All we're going to hear from Allison.

And the reason we've got both of these to come to share their stories tonight is because there is a lot to think about when you're hosting refugees.

We're so encouraged by the numbers of people that have signed up and all, uh, 112 of you. I believe on this call, and there'll be some more on Sunday and then the others like Liz mentioned, who are gonna.

Offer other types of support.

But yeah, there is a lot to think about. So first we're going to hear from Allison. Allison is part of a community sponsorship group called Oxford welcomes Refugees and they have very recently welcomed a family refugee family to Oxford. So this is a slightly different model to what you're hoping to do.

On this call, because the sponsorship model that Allison has used is about getting a family in their own house.

Thing, but she's going to have some great insights to you for you about what it's like to support a refugee family. So Allison.

Over to you.

OK, well thank you very much for giving me the chance to talk about why favourite activity at the moment and lovely that so many people have signed up. That's absolutely great. Really exciting.

Yeah, so as Hannah said we we about two months ago received a Palestinian family from Iraq.

We had been preparing for it for a long time, so that's where the this is rather different from the present pattern that you're going to be following, and so it's a parents and, uh, a son of 11 and a daughter of seven.

And as I said, yes they arrived two months ago. We met them at the airport and we're committed to supporting them for two years and possibly beyond that.

But that's the commitment and it Hannah is quite right. We had to find rented accommodation for them and.

And I'm sitting in Oxford, and that's really difficult in Oxford because it's just so expensive. But we managed it.

Or rather other people managed it so we have a team there about 10 of us who formed the team.

And we've worked together both in the planning and training and so on and in the actual supporting. And it's been a really steep learning curve.

I, I think that it's it's a somebody said to me it's a bit like having a baby in the sense that you've no idea what it's going to be like.

After you've had the birth, you know it could be almost anything.

But it's been absolutely fascinating and and I just wanted to share with you that tomorrow, the 11 year old boy is starting secondary school.

We did have to struggle to find a small place for him. It took seven weeks actually.

But he's it's from a Muslim family and they are going to the Roman Catholic Secondary School in Oxford and and I just hope and pray he'll be fine. He's got very little English.

Anyway, I'm

The the things that are kind of similar or the things we've learned that I think are relevant to what you're going to be doing, is first of all, you really need to do your research and find out.

What and who might be able to be involved locally and and by locally I mean our group is predominantly part of the local parish church, but we've also drawn on a wider group of.

People as well.

And it's some of the things that are really kind of quite obvious if you think about when you have gone to live in a new area, what are the things that you have found difficult and what are the things you've needed help with. It's like that, but on a a a bigger scale really. And and I was remembering.

That when my family we, we moved from a little tiny village in Wiltshire to Oxford. When our son was about 11 or 12.

And he said, I, I just want to go and walk around the area like I used to in the village, mum.

So I said OK, not too far and he'd be back in half an hour and he came back in tears and I said, what's the matter? And he said nobody said hello to me nobody knew my name and that was the difference.

And being in the village, and so there's something really important that that, I think we're reminded of there. But one of the first things that we need to do is.

And help the family connect with some other people and, and particularly in this scheme.

And you know that the host has got people usually living on either side of them or in the street and and it's really important not to think.

Oh, you know we don't. They want to be quiet and so on.

But to be able.

For them to go out for a walk and find some people that.

They can say hello to and he'll know their names is really really important.

So that kind.

Of gentle sociability is really important, and.

And and.

Things very practical. Things like how to use the buses, how you get a ticket, what, what it costs, and all those kinds of things.

And and I think in conversation, particularly with people coming from Ukraine where it has been, there's been.

Such a lot.

Of violence and trauma and so on. To find a balance, really.

Between, the important thing is not to cross question people when they've had really difficult experiences, but to create an atmosphere where it's comfortable and safe.

If they do want to start talking about some of the difficult things, and it's OK to do so, and they feel that.

But also involving people in things that they've enjoyed before in Ukraine. I should think it's really, really important that they've got strength from before, so finding out what their interests are and connecting them up, whether it's playing bridge or going to the cinema or joining a choir or whatever.

Those sort of simple things seem to be to me a really important part of being a host really, and they're not very technical at all and so, uhm.

The other thing obviously, is to be aware of where to go to for help. If people really are experiencing emotional difficulties, and I'm in Oxford, so we're very very lucky to have a charity that works with refugees and has worked.

For over 20 years of refugees who have experienced trauma. So in Oxford, obviously that would be the main resource rather than your local GP who might not have that much understanding of what has been happening.

But it will be different in different areas and.

OK, so that's kind of the atmosphere. I think. Really in the simple things.

The other thing that's really, really important, and we've touched on it, is communication, and particularly where people the family arriving don't have much or any English.

It's a big problem actually. If you can't talk the same language, but one thing we discovered actually that there's something called Google Translate that you can use, it's free. You can get to on your phone and you just type in a simple message in English.

It converts it into the relevant language and I was nervous of using that. I thought, well, I don't know what I'm saying, but actually it was incredibly reliable for simple messages and factual things, so you know, do try that out even on the 1st evening with people and just see how it works.

Yeah, English language. Obviously learning is really important and and.

We were lucky in that a member of our group was a qualified ESOL teacher and she had access to a course which was predominantly speaking and not writing. And that was a really good place to start, UM.

But other technology matters to a lot of people because they want to keep in touch with people from back home.

So you know things like Wi-Fi and making sure that the mobile phones you can top them up because they don't automatically work in different countries. So think about those things.

One other thing I mean, I was trying to imagine what it would be like if the family we are helping was actually living in my house with me and and I was reminded that when somebody did stay in with us for quite a long time, who we didn't really know very.

Well, I wished right at the outset that I we'd talked through. What are the things that would really irritate me that they might do and and and to create some ground rules that that everybody understood? I, I I was remembering one guest who would get his own breakfast and then.

If something ran out instead of thinking of going to the shop and get it when he was out, would just put the empty packet.

In front of me and walk off.

I absolutely hated that, and so if you think what is it? I really don't want them to do and make that quite clear from the outset.

That would be really helpful I think and and then. Finally, the more technical things you know it can be a bit slow.

As I said, we've had to wait for seven weeks to find a secondary school place and and the the young man concerned has felt really sad because his younger sister got into school really quickly.

Uhm, I think you will get help with that. I don't think it's something that you hosts will need to do themselves, but you probably will be helping with filling in forms and so on.

And and benefits, yes.

It was mentioned that people will be given £200 right at the start, I think and and.

Normally it's the minimum of five weeks before benefits come through, so that's not a lot of money for five weeks, really.

So you may have to think about how to deal with that and and how much you want to help the family.

In that period.

And and finally.

There are simple things like you know showing people how to do shopping and what the currency means and things like that, which are quite straightforward and opening bank accounts.

But I guess some of the more technical things you will get a lot of help with really, because why should you know how to do that?

And and there will be people in your community or in your church who can help with that. I mean, I was amazed in my church.

That everybody that I asked if they would be willing to help with something I I was aware they knew a bit about every single person said yes.

So you you know it's it's really nice. People do want to help enormously.

You're not on your own.

I'll stop.

Brilliant thank you Allison. Yeah and I think there's a real atmosphere of wanting to help at the moment and and I heard earlier from someone from one of the local authorities that said said that schools are going to be prepared for taking in in students. We're not sure how.

That will work, but.

They are preparing for that and also discussions about how quickly they can get people onto benef.

It's also happening as well, so hopefully these things will be in place by the time you get a guest coming to you, so thank you again, Allison and over to Jill, Jill is a vicar in Tilehurst which is a suburb of Reading I believe, and you've hosted.

People haven't you Jill. And so I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about your experience and perhaps some of the joys, but also some of the more difficult bits as well.

OK, well I think you're all fantastic offering your homes to complete strangers and I did it because I'm in a big Vicarage and I've got 3 spare rooms but I only offered one and I live on my own so it was a one to one sort of offering so it might be different for.

Some folks who have whole families come.

And the thing about hosting is, it enriches your life because you're learning about another culture and you do have to learn it's a give and take thing.

And and I think we tend to assume that the way we do things is the right way or the obvious way and we make.

Assumptions, but what I learned was.

That there are different ways of thinking about all sorts of manner of things, and the most essential thing when somebody arrives is to know how to pronounce their name.

And you know, some names are very difficult to pronounce. I think Ukrainian names probably are. I was directed a charity working in Bosnia for nearly two decades, so I know a lot about the Bosnian culture, and I suspect Ukraine isn't too different. And I suspect the Ukrainians.

Are very direct in the way they talk. The Bosnians. They don't say, please and thank you very much, so you might be expecting a thank you.

If you've cooked a nice meal, no well it, it might be a different culture, but I didn't get.

Thank yous because your family, you're all in it together so it's not necessary. It's a a note of intimacy rather than not being polite or anything.

So there were there were.

Happy times, you know. I made strong alliances with each person I had. I had three refugees and not for six months for two months, three months and just over a month, each one and.

Uh, boundaries, I would say I'm I'm not very good at setting boundaries because I'm a bit easygoing, so I'd say, Oh yeah, that's fine, and because I wanted it to work, you know I was the one that was happy to be, you know, easygoing however.

You have to set boundaries, so my first.

Guest, uh, she had a relationship with somebody and her husband was dying and so she was up at until 2:00 in the morning talking to this woman and then again at 5:00 o'clock in the morning talking to her. And she had a very loud voice and I didn't get very much.

Sleep and because.

I hadn't said anything about quiet times in the house or bedtimes or getting up times it. It was a little bit difficult to cope with so, so as Allison said, think about the boundaries and and how you want to run your home with your guests.

In it, the other thing is television and using the the lounge or the living areas, you know.

If if you've got one or two or a whole family with you, you might think it be nice to watch the telly together, but you might have very different ideas of what you want to watch, so it might be worth trying to negotiate. You know, when, when, who does what, that sort of thing.

My my guests were always willing to help and to do things probably a little bit more than I wanted. So for example, they did gardening things and that.

Without asking me.

I found bricks round beds that I didn't want there and I found hedges cut but I didn't want cut and bushes cut so it's just very important and and I would say really important to be very direct. Don't think that you can say things politely.

Or just hint at a way to behave now you've got to be very.

Clear so show all the kitchen. Show how everything works. Talk about the heating, who can use the bathroom when it's just helpful to be very clear and not to be overly polite and the thing about Google Translate is it is fantastic.

One issue I did have was when I wanted to go away for a weekend.

It was I didn't think about that and I'm away from Friday to Monday. Can I leave my guests in my home?

Do I trust my guests? You know, it's not that I don't trust them, but will they be OK? So think about holidays and what you're going to do about holidays.

Uhm, I think it's really helpful if you can teach yourself a few.

You, Ukrainian phrases and again Google Translate. They say the words you can press the little button and it tells you how to pronounce them.

So things like hello, welcome, how are you goodbye goodnight, just very simple stuff and even if they speak brilliant English.

Uh, it's, uh, welcoming.

And I would also find out what Ukrainians like to eat and you know, we think we're all European we or the same. No, we don't. They're they're eating.

Tastes might be very different from yours. So again, are you going to eat meals together? Are you going to eat them separately?

Are you happy for people to cook in in your kitchen and and then who's gonna do the tidying up the cleaning up? All that sort of thing. It all needs thinking through.

Even people who are very fluent in the language and sometimes they not might not be very good at the written words, so reading might be very difficult and writing might be very difficult. And I I think I'm right. I'm tihana, but Ukraine is. They use Cyrillic so that.

Alphabet is even different from ours, so you know this isn't this isn't easy stuff we need.

To think about this.

Oh, and Ukraine is one of the poorest countries in Europe, and it was before the war. But it's also one of the best educated.

So don't don't think that people aren't educated, they're they're very educated, but I would be cautious about throwing your wealth.

Around you know you've got to be sensitive. One issue I had was for my birthday I got about 30 birthday cards 'cause I come from a big family and my Churchill gave me birthday.

Cards Well, my guest on her birthday. She got one card and that was from me and when she saw all my cards, you know.

She is. She was so grateful to have the home and yet it it also emphasised the the difference and it was really tricky 'cause I couldn't hide.

My well, I could have put my cards in different rooms. She you know if what you do it's just so difficult and that is the other thing and post traumatic stress.

I suspect the folks that are coming here, well, I I don't know, I know nothing, but maybe it'll be mostly women and children.

And maybe they got out of the country before they saw anything, but maybe they didn't and the the trauma of what they've been through it. It just can't be.

Uh, underestimated of the effect, the emotional effect and the mental health effect that will have on on some individuals.

And so that thing about giving them space but also knowing who to go to should it arise. Is is really important?

So yeah, I think I think.

Yes, so it it will be ongoing and the thing about grieving grieving for their country, their nation, what they've lost, you know.

So it's a whole new world, but it's a whole transition and a period they're going through, so it's very difficult, and their loyalty is to to their people group and you know, they.

They're very glad to be out of the conflict, but.

It's not easy.

I think that's probably most thank you. My stories, yeah yeah, yeah.

Early in.

Thank you so much Jill. Both you and Allison have given us a lot to think about and reflect upon and really grounded as well.

Because sometimes I think when you're thinking about things like this before they happen, it can feel a bit like theory, but your stories help us to ground it in reality and know that this is a real thing that's happening. So thank you for that.

And and also just to say whilst I remember Jill mentioned about cooking, so you're not as a host expected to cook and provide all the food, but it may be that is something you want to do, and so that's something that you will need to think about.

Great, so moving swiftly on back to Liz and she's going to go through a couple more important things for you to know before we open the floor to questions. So Liz back.

To you.

Thank you, so I'm going to actually ask my colleague David Mason, who works in for the dicis in buildings to just go through a couple of pieces of information that he's pulled together.

They will be on our website of do's and don'ts starting with the domes actually to do with our our houses and and the.

Homes that were welcoming.

People into so David I've I've pulled these off your sheets that you gave us and I put the don'ts first.

And then I put.

The Jews to end on a positive.

Ladies, thank you very much and good evening everybody. Can I also add my thanks to the many of you who are offering to help in this way.

We're really blessed to have so many of you responding in this way and thank you too for those who've contributed to this discussion so far.

I'm going to concentrate on the legal side of this, so you've heard a lot of the practical points that have been raised.

This is about trying to avoid a situation where you may inadvertently end up in a difficult position legally.

So in particular, I want to address this perhaps to those of you who.

Don't own your own accommodation and perhaps are renting from a landlord.

You can't just go ahead and and offer for refugees to share your accommodation with you. You would need to go and talk.

To your landlord. It might also be the case if you have a mortgage that you may need to talk to your your bank is not clear on that yet whether that that might be a constraint.

I'm I'm hoping you can actually see the slides in front on the screen so the the key one. Thank you Liz for confirming that the key one is about not offering the whole of your property.

The Council.

And the reason for that is there may be a situation where you're inadvertently creating a legal agreement that then makes it difficult for you to get possession back after the six months have expired. And just to be clear, I think it's already been mentioned. The expectation is that it.

Should initially be a minimum period of six months. That's something obviously you'll need to think about carefully. The main point of principle here is that you are inviting them in as your guests, so it is very much an informal arrangement.

And you will see that there are other organisations that are suggesting you should enter into whether a lodging agreement or licence.

We're saying very plainly, particularly to to clergy who I'm responsible for housing, and but also also to others. It's really better for the moment.

To leave it as an informal, you're here as our guest, not under a formal agreement.

I need to explain the reasons perhaps why it might be a problem for you and Liz. I'm assuming these aren't on the next slide.

One of them is that Council tax. So if you are a single person in your home then you invite people to chair with you for a period of time.

Then your ability to get your single person discount for your Council tax you would.

Lose that you.

Would have to pay extra council tax.

And what else do I need to alert you to? Yes, the other point is about potentially creating what's called a home for multiple occupation and in Oxford City Council in particular, but I know it's relevant in other councils that is something they look at.

Very carefully so Oxford City Council will put a limit on the number of people that can join in with sharing your house with you. Otherwise you get caught by this legislation that requires.

You, as the property owner, to have a particular licence to be able to operate a home from multiple occupation.

It also means you have to undertake improvements to your property in terms of things like fire rating, fire doors, that type of thing and then the one that that's involved very clearly at.

At the bottom there is don't move out of your house for any period of time. Alison referred earlier to sort of going away for a long weekend. Clearly that's not not an issue. This is about not physically moving out and relocating somewhere else.

Thank you, could I have the next?

Slide downloads please.

So duze, sorry, I've covered this earlier 'cause I had anticipated goals coming the second slide.

But it is clear from the government that people are going to be expected to offer a minimum of six months and then a really important point about your insurance cover. Now most of our vicarages.

That we, as a Diocese of responsible, are insured through ecclesiastical insurance group.

UM, who are being very flexible in this?

If you're not insured with them, you probably ought just to cheque with your insurers whether they have any particular requirements or objections.

My understanding is that the industry is going to be flexible on this, but it is pleased. Worth checking out first of all, and then finally. And I've already covered this points.

About needing landlord permission if you don't own the house those you are living in, thank you very much.

Thank you, David. Thank you very much indeed.

We want everybody to be as safe as possible. We already mentioned right at the beginning that once your matching has happened and you know that you've got somebody coming, the local authority have a duty to carry out cheques.

They'll carry out a home cheque and DBS on everyone. I've got over 16, but it might be 18 and we need to clarify that in your household and these cheques.

May not happen until after your guests have a.

Arrived, I've talked about the fact that we might ask you to do a confidential declaration form and give us a reference, but to help you get ready for the local authority cheques, there's just two quick bits of information I want to give you and these will be available on the website and we'll make sure that you've got everything in in a handy pack anyway.

Getting yourself home cheque ready. We haven't got any particular guidance on on what that might be.

Applied, but I think I don't know. I I started thinking about what it was like. When you know I I bought my new baby home when I was a new mum and the sort of things that I'd never thought about beforehand.

Which is, you know, where am I keeping the chemicals and where am I?

Keeping the medicine.

And it's it's just practical things like.

That that we might have got out of the habit of doing.

And things you need to think about is is.

There adequate privacy for the.

People that you're inviting into your home.

Are your smoke alarms working? What about kitchen safety? If you've got small children or the knives well out of reach, the sort of things that we we may forget about, how are you going to manage any pets?

Window safety if you've got small children above ground level, how safe for your windows? Are they lockable that.

Sort of thing. Garden security.

If people are going to be playing outside stair safety medicine safety, that's just some things to start with. There's two links here which we will make sure that you have that.

That are not in any way indicative of what the local thought he might decide to do, but they're for foster carers and they might just give you a whole load of other things to think about as well. Just just in case you want to see the sort of cheque.

That local authorities doing I suspect this cheque will be relatively light touch and the main things you need to think about is how your home can be kept as safe as possible and then the other things you might want to do in preparation is just make sure you've got all the documentation you need for a DBZ you may already have a DBZ, it may already be registered with the update service.

And that's going to make things more straightforward, but if you haven't, there's some information here that says that you will.

Need some information from root.

From a passport or driving licence, and with your photograph on and then two documents from Group 2 and we we don't.

We won't go.

Through all of this now, but I will make sure that you've got this information. You also need to make sure you've got your National Insurance number handy, and five years worth of addresses and that should make the BS.

Plus, it's really, really straightforward.

I'm going to hand over for Hannah some full final thinking, and then we'll take questions. And if you want to start putting any of your questions into chat, we can do that.

And when we come to questions, I'll ask if Emma can help me manage who's asking questions and who's got their hands up.

So Hannah.

Thank you.

So yes, there's been a lot of information, but we hope that that really informs how you reflect upon this hosting opportunity and.

And we know that hosting people in your home for a minimum of six months is.

A big commitment.

And and whilst we know that there really is an urgent need for resettling Ukrainians as they flee from war, we want to make sure that all of you.

Have thought through this.

And so on the screen and on the next couple of slides which I won't go through in detail now.

But there's some questions that we would love you to look at and consider, and they aren't there to put you off. And please don't think that, but they're just to help you think things through.

Because there will be an impact time wise, potentially emotionally and and to help you prepare as well so that things in in your head already. So that probably when problems arise you've thought through how you might respond.

And we know that this will be a sacrifice, but like Jill talked about, it will be one that brings joy and new learning. But there will be hard moments and.

All of you clearly want to help, and we are so encouraged by that, but we also do want to say that if upon reflection, you don't feel that it's possible or practical for you to host, then that's totally OK.

And please don't worry about that. There are so many other opportunities for you to get involved. We really do need people supporting people who are hosting as well as host themselves.

So if you think actually it's not going to work for you, that's fine and we are happy to help you support in other ways.