

Siobhan McArdle
Assistant Secretary
Social Care & Mental Health Division
Sent via email only: siobhan_mcardle@health.gov.ie

07 April 2022

Our Ref: 220407/CG/ CI-0000864

Re: Ukrainian Refugee Accommodation

Dear Siobhan,

I am writing to you regarding the importance of ensuring refugees, primarily as a consequence of the war in Ukraine, are looked after in appropriate and safe accommodation.

As Chief Inspector of Social Services, my primary role is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people in residential care in Ireland, including in nursing homes, through regulation.

I am aware that the current urgent requirement to secure accommodation for refugees arriving in Ireland has led to consideration of some nursing homes being made available as possible homes for them.

To assist with this, I have taken the liberty of compiling a list of the names and addresses of nursing homes that have closed since 2019, which may merit consideration (see appendix 1). I am also currently reviewing three applications to register new buildings as nursing homes, which may also be worthy of consideration for use as accommodation for people coming from Ukraine, in advance of my office proceeding with the registration of

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these centres. In such a case, the provider would be free to reapply for registration when the centre was vacant again.

Separately, I am aware that there may be nursing home complexes where the nursing home and the services it utilises can be completely segregated from another wing, block or building on its site. Such complexes could possibly be used to provide accommodation and support services for refugees. Consideration could be given to these nursing homes on a case-by-case basis.

I am, however, concerned that current discussions with nursing home providers could potentially create a situation whereby a provider of a nursing home, currently registered and providing a home to vulnerable residents, may:

1. consider closing the nursing home in order to provide an alternative service. In this situation of competing needs, it is important that the voices of vulnerable residents of nursing homes continue to be heard.
2. accommodate refugees on a floor of the nursing home building, resulting in the need for sharing of basic services, such as catering and access to garden spaces, as well as impacting fire safety.
3. provide accommodation that is potentially unsuitable for the number and needs of people being proposed.

As you will appreciate, for residents, the nursing home is their home, and we have to be mindful of the impact on their lives and their wishes. The possible actions outlined in points 1 and 2 above have the potential to disrupt the lives of nursing home residents. In point 1, such action would result in residents losing their home. In point 2, the accommodation of large numbers of people on a floor of a building not only presents the potential for disruption to the lives of residents, but also to their safety and security. The points outlined above raise serious concerns about the care and welfare of the residents, particularly in relation to protection and safeguarding, infection prevention and control, and fire safety. They also highlighted concern about the welfare and safety of those from Ukraine seeking refuge.

These concerns are significant and have the potential to have a negative impact on the wellbeing of vulnerable people. To put this into context, earlier this week, my office had discussions with a service provider who proposes to accommodate potentially 140 people from Ukraine on a floor in a building where the floors above and beneath are part of a

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registered designated centre. This specific example gives rise to significant concerns regarding the care and welfare of residents, particularly in the areas of:

- the security of the designated centre due to the use of services to access the floor being proposed for accommodation
- fire safety, especially in light of the number of people proposed to be accommodated on this floor being almost three times the number intended to be accommodated
- infection prevention and control concerns, particularly in light of the impact COVID-19 has had on residents in nursing homes over the last two years
- the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable older people

I also have reservations as to the suitability of this proposed accommodation for those people, mainly women and children coming from Ukraine. The impact on their human rights must be considered especially around potential restricted access to communal space, easy egress to and from the building, kitchen facilities, and availability of outdoor space.

Another issue has also arisen, where some providers have contacted us regarding the recruitment of people who have recently arrived from Ukraine. We are aware that people arriving from Ukraine are being issued with a PPS number through Government officials at the airport. However, at present under the regulations, vetting disclosures and reference are required. Providers are seeking guidance on these requirements in order to be able to employ suitable candidates from the Ukraine people employed in designated centres. I would appreciate a meeting to discuss these issues at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Carol Grogan
Chief Inspector of Social Services

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