

Good morning everyone, my name is Meg Ryan and it is my pleasure to be in attendance of today's joint committee meeting. I am Lead Caseworker on the Irish Red Cross Migration Services team.

To give some context of the role of my team. The Irish Red Cross is tasked under its mandate as auxiliary to the Irish Government to co-ordinate offers of support from the Irish Public, to support the placement of refugees into accommodation and to support the social integration of refugees at community level.

The Strategic Goal of the Programme is to enable refugees in Ireland to integrate into Irish society and achieve their potential. The Irish Red Cross has been providing support in this regard to the Irish Government since 2015 to assist the fulfilment of its EU commitment to promote the resettlement and integration of refugees under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. In addition to the Ukrainian Cohort with whom we are currently working, the Irish Red Cross Migration Services team also work with numerous cohorts from Syria and Afghanistan in addition to support to Community Sponsorship programmes.

The Migration Services team has been working in coordination with the Irish Government and partner organisations to assist in the Irish nation's response to the war in Ukraine.

The caseworker team provide active casework support to Ukrainians in Ireland through matching of suitable accommodation and support to essential needs such as access to medical support, social welfare and education where required and in association with relevant Government Departments.

With regards to the purpose of today's meeting, when discussing Education and Supports Provision for Displaced Ukrainian Students, my main questions will be raised from a caseworker perspective and influenced by the experiences I have witnessed with my clients.

The main struggle I have seen evidenced amongst parents in Ireland is finding suitable access to school places in Ireland. With many schools already at capacity and with wait lists not all Ukrainian children have easy access to the Irish education system.

Access to additional language support and English lessons will ease much of the tension felt by students who have been thrown into a new learning environment in a foreign language but it would be my recommendation to extend these supports within schools to include parents also.

The Provision of Psychological Supports for Ukrainian Students in Ireland requires either appropriate language support for translation or a system whereby Ukrainian health care professionals in Ireland are given the means to practice in the State.

I look forward to today's discussion.