
**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives

Homes For Ukraine Housing Strategy and Sourcing Private Rented Accommodation



Date: November 2022

Housing Strategy for Ukrainian refugees

1. Stay with sponsor if at all possible. Homes for Ukraine Team (H4U) can support sponsors and guests
2. If not possible, rematch to another sponsor
3. If not possible, look for private rented accommodation
4. If no accommodation can be found and the household becomes homeless, offer of emergency accommodation via the Housing Options Team (could be out of area)

Key points

1. Demand for accommodation is high so housing is expensive in Bath and NE Somerset
2. Long waits for social housing
3. High demand for private rented accommodation
4. Bath and NE Somerset Council is offering an additional £100 to sponsors in months 7-12
5. The Government also says sponsors 'may ask guests to pay a reasonable and proportionate contribution (according to use) for water, gas and electricity consumed or supplied to the accommodation or to any shared facilities' (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance>).

Financial assistance with private rented accommodation (top up guaranteed for 12 months only)

| Bedroom Need | Local Housing Allowance (pcm) | Golden Hello/Top Up (pcm paid as a lump sum) | Total |
|--|-------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Shared accommodation rate (for single adult under the age of 35) | £458.55 | £100 | £558.55 |
| 1 Bedroom | £723.02 | £150 | £873.02 |
| 2 Bedroom | £847.69 | £250 | £1,097.69 |
| 3 Bedroom | £992.29 | £300 | £1,292.29 |

If not possible to stay with your sponsor

Local housing allowance (LHA) is the Housing Benefit element of Universal Credit that can be claimed to help with accommodation costs (column 1).

The amount is determined by the bedroom need of a household and to find out what you are eligible for you can use <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/BedRoomCalculator.aspx>

If you are working you may not be entitled to the full LHA but you can use the Entitled to calculator to find out what you are entitled to <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

The H4U Team will also pay an additional top up to the LHA **based on your bedroom need only**. This is payable to households irrespective of whether they are working or not (column 2).

So if you are not working, you can only look for properties advertised at the total of the LHA and the additional top up (column 3).

If you are working, the H4U team will need to see your income and expenditure before offering the top up so we know the tenancy is affordable and sustainable for you. This is the same if you want to rent a property that is larger than your actual household bedroom need.

The income and expenditure form you will need to complete is here [Income and Expenditure sheet](#)

The LHA and the H4U top up are separate financial payments and are not related to each other.

If a household only has 1 adult aged under 18 years old a 25% reduction to the Council Tax bill due on the property will be applied.

Help to find/access private rented accommodation

1. You must search for accommodation yourselves
2. Some landlords will take pets, others won't
3. Private rented appointments at the Council Offices on Wednesdays
4. Bath Welcomes Refugees may be able to help with the search if your sponsor is not able to. Please email the H4U team in the first instance and we can make a referral for you
5. H4U will pay rent in advance (usually 5 weeks), agency fees to set up the tenancy **and** pay the top up rent in a lump sum at the start of the tenancy
6. Homefinder interest free loan for the deposit if do not have own funds

Increasing the chances of securing private rented accommodation

1. Letter from H4U Team stating what will be paid by the scheme
2. Working/in employment
3. Reference from sponsor
4. Reference from employer

Support with furnishings

1. The Welfare Support Team may be able to provide a grant for up to £500. Need to make an application and is means tested. Contact details Welfare_Support@BATHNES.GOV.UK Tel 01225 47 72 77. An application form may need to be completed [Welfare Support Application Form](#).
2. Bath Welcomes Refugees has a small supply of furniture – please let us know if you would like us to refer you.
3. The Genesis Trust also has a furniture store <https://genesistrust.org.uk/>

Looking for accommodation out of area

It is possible to look out of area and rent can be less expensive but the Local Housing allowance may also be less. However, the H4U top up rent will be paid out of area at the rate shown above.

Staying on beyond 12 months

We will develop some guidance for sponsors who wish to extend their sponsorship beyond 12 months (when the sponsor 'thank you' payment is due to cease)- as their guests may be able to claim rent at rate of the local housing allowance.

Sponsors will need to check their lease/tenancy agreement or with their mortgage lender and insurance company if they continue to sponsor beyond 12 months.

Family Visa Scheme

Unfortunately, at the moment guests arriving under the Family Visa scheme can not receive any financial support from the Government. However, we are enquiring and looking out for announcements.

Other schemes

We are aware other there are other Local Authorities offering different schemes but at the moment our focus is on preventing guests becoming homeless and on rematching guests that can no longer stay with their sponsors.

We are currently contacting those sponsors that registered in the beginning on Foundry (the Government system), that don't yet have guests to find out if they are still willing to host.

We are looking for more long and short term sponsors that are willing to host for a short period only in emergency situations.

Finding a Home in the Private Rented Sector

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Social Housing in Bath and North East Somerset is in very short supply and there is an extremely high demand for the limited number of housing association properties that become available. If you are no longer able to stay with your current sponsor, finding accommodation independently in the private rented sector may be your best or only available housing option.

Where to Find Properties

Newspapers

Bath Chronicle (www.thisisbath.co.uk)

Thursday - local property section.

Notice Boards & Shop Windows

Cards placed in newsagents' windows advertise properties and rooms.

Students' Union or College

If you are a student, your college or university may be able to help you find somewhere to stay.

Word of Mouth

Friends, family and workmates can be a good source.

DON'T BE PUT OFF if an advert states '*no DSS or Housing Benefit*', always take the time to enquire and explain your situation. Sometimes landlords can change their minds when they speak you!

Websites

www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/

www.rightmove.co.uk

www.onthemarket.com/to-rent/

www.gumtree.com

www.roombuddies.co.uk

www.spareroom.co.uk

www.openrent.co.uk

Facebook – marketplace

It is **essential to register and also check sites daily** if possible, as new adverts are constantly being added and properties get snapped up quickly.

Letting Agencies

Letting agencies let and manage rooms, flats and houses on behalf of private landlords.

Most agencies advertise on-line and in the local press.

IMPORTANT – BAN ON LETTING FEES

The Tenant Fees Act (2019) came into force for properties rented in England on 1 June 2019.

Landlords are not allowed to charge for admin, letting fees, vetting, references, inventory, check in, check out, cleaning, pet insurance or ANY other fee that is not explicitly permitted within the legislation.

DEPOSITS NEW LAW

As from 1 June 2019 a tenancy security deposit is restricted to NO MORE than **FIVE weeks' rent**.

Failure to comply with the law means penalties and fines:

- A landlord will not be able to issue a section 21 notice to end a tenancy;
- Tenants will be eligible to seek recompense from the county courts;
- Trading Standards will be enforcing the legislation and landlords may face criminal prosecution or a fine between £5000 and £30,000.

Further information about the new law can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent>

Local libraries have **internet access** at a small charge and staff can help you log on. **If you do not have email**, you can sign up for a free account with many companies.

Securing a Place

When looking for private accommodation, it is often first-come first-served, so contact landlords as soon as you see the vacancy.

Viewing a property, even a cheap bedsit, is similar to an interview for both parties, the better impression you can give to the landlord the more likely you are offered the property.

If your relationship with your sponsor is good, ask them for a reference to show how well you have treated their property.

The Homes for Ukraine team (H4U team) can also provide a letter (included in this pack) which outlines the financial support you are able to get from the Council.

Deposit

It is important that you know how you will raise this before you meet a landlord. You can apply for a Homefinder interest free loan to borrow the deposit. Contact the Housing Options Advice Team on 01225 396296 or HousingOptionsAdviceTeam@BATHNES.GOV.UK for the application form. You will need to provide details of your income and expenditure ([Income and Expenditure sheet](#)).

The H4U Team will also need to see the income and expenditure form to be satisfied the property is affordable and the tenancy sustainable before agreeing to pay the top up.

Paying Your Rent: Housing Benefit/Universal Credit;www.gov.uk/apply-universal credit

If you are on benefits, or a low income, you may be eligible for housing benefit/Universal Credit to help you pay your rent. Housing benefit/Universal Credit is worked out using the “Local Housing Allowance” based on your household, the area the property is in, the income and savings the tenant has.

If you are under 35 and single you will probably only be entitled to a limited amount of housing benefit. This is called the single room rent allowance and the maximum is £458.55 per month.

If you are over 35 and sharing, you may be entitled to the 1 bedroom rate if you’re claiming housing costs under Universal Credit.

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The H4U team will also pay rent in advance (usually 5 weeks), pay the agency fees **and** pay the top up rent in a lump sum at the start of the tenancy. A supporting letter to landlords can be found after the useful contacts and website details below.

The Local Housing Allowance rates are different in areas outside of Bath and NE Somerset and the rates for Bristol can be found here

<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/local-housing-allowance-lha>

Useful contact and website details

- **Homes for Ukraine email: H4U@bathnes.gov.uk**
- **Housing Advice Team email: HousingOptions_AdviceTeam@bathnes.gov.uk**
- **Housing Advice Team telephone number : 01225 396296**
- **Welfare_Support@BATHNES.GOV.UK Telephone number: 01225 477277**

- **Bath and North East Somerset Council**
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/local-housing-allowance-lha>
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/apply-housing-benefit>

- **Bath Welcomes Refugees**
<https://www.bathwelcomesrefugees.org.uk/>

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives

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www.bathnes.gov.uk
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November 2022

Dear Landlord/Letting Agent

We are writing to you from the B&NES 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. We have welcomed many Ukrainian families to our area who have found sanctuary here after fleeing the war.

When the initial sponsorship period ends, families may need to find rental accommodation. One of our Ukrainian families is very interested in renting a property from you.

The council recognises the challenges of securing private rented accommodation for our Ukrainian guests so is offering a number of financial incentives to landlords:

1. Depending upon the property size, location and condition, we can offer landlords a 'top up' of rent, which can range from £100 - £300 above the Local Housing Allowance depending upon property size. For example, a 2 bedroom property in Bath, the LHA rate is £847 – so we could offer an amount that would top this up to approximately £1,100 per month. This is paid in advance in a lump sum direct to the landlord at the start of the tenancy
2. We gift our Ukrainian families the amount for the rent in advance (either 4 or 5 weeks), and also arrange for a loan of the deposit so the big costs at the outset are taken care of. This is also paid direct to the landlord.
3. We can contribute towards agent's fees to set up the tenancy.
4. We help our Ukrainian guests to furnish their accommodation if needed.
5. We support our Ukrainian guests to make sure they are set up well to manage their new tenancy – with direct debits, etc arranged, and ongoing support available. We also check the tenancy is affordable and sustainable for them.

As well as these financial incentives, the landlord would also know that they had personally helped a Ukrainian family at this time of need. We know that this is a really important factor for many of us, who have watched the appalling war unfolding and wondered 'what can I do to help?'

I hope that you are able to consider this if you are the landlord, or pass this onto the landlord. We are also available to discuss any elements of this if need be. Please email us at H4U@bathnes.gov.uk

With best wishes,

Louise Murphy

Louise Murphy
Homes For Ukraine Team, B&NES Council