

Birmingham City Council - Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Accommodation Options and Move-On Funds

Information Brochure

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Introduction

The Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme commenced in March 2022 where households were able to register to become sponsors for Ukrainian

households wanting to come to the UK to escape the war in their country. In common with other Local Authorities, Birmingham City Council mobilized very quickly to facilitate the scheme, by undertaking property checks, safeguarding and DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks for all potential sponsors to ensure that guests were safe in sponsors homes as well as implementing processes for welfare visits, and ensure that information was available for sponsors and their guests.

Most sponsors receiving guests had little notice or information about what their role might entail, with many sponsors agreeing to come forward to support those fleeing the war, little or no previous experience of hosting guests from another country for a substantial period.

Birmingham City Council is very grateful for the generosity shown by the hundreds of Homes for Ukraine hosts across the city, who have opened their homes to Ukrainian families and continue to support them. We are also very grateful for the work of the many local organisations working with hosts and directly with Ukrainian refugees.

Sponsorship arrangements are a temporary arrangement to provide Ukraine arrivals with some initial security and opportunity to begin to settle independently in the city. Moving from hosted to independent accommodation is a significant step for Ukrainian families and for hosts therefore Refugee and Migrant Centre alongside Spring Housing as partners with Birmingham City Council are ready to provide advice and support to guests and sponsors. Please contact your Resettlement Worker and/or your Spring Housing Advisor via your existing routes if you want to discuss this further.

Central Government have also published guidance to also help sponsors and guests to navigate this next stage of moving to independent accommodation and this can be found at Homes for Ukraine: sponsor guidance GOV.UK page as

well as specific [guidance to help guests understand how to rent in England](#). This guide is now available in [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-guests>

The web address above takes you to the “How to rent” web page containing guidance links in Ukrainian and Russian.

Demand and existing housing context

The pressure on housing in Birmingham is significant, especially access to housing that is affordable for households on lower incomes. There are over 23,500 households on the City Council Housing Register, and the City Council receives over 500 applications each week. These are all households where there is a housing need, those households are banded according to their housing need and can bid for properties that become available through Birmingham City Council or our partners. An average year will see 3000-4000 properties become available and a significant proportion of these will be 1-bedroom flats.

Birmingham also sees around 300 households approach the City Council each week to be assessed as to whether they are homeless and require interventions to prevent homelessness or help in accessing alternative accommodation. This results in over 4000 households currently being in forms of temporary accommodation both in Birmingham and beyond. For many households the need for emergency accommodation can result in being found temporary accommodation in a hotel or B&B, often away from areas of preference; and then an extended period in other forms of temporary accommodation until a permanent home is secured.

Reflecting these pressures Birmingham City Council is keen to support Ukrainian households to sustain hosted options or be rematched with new hosts where this is the most suitable option or secure accommodation in the private rented

sector. More information on rematching can be found on page 6 under “Finding a new sponsor”.

Planned accommodation moves

Planned moves

All Ukrainian households have a dedicated Refugee and Migrant Centre Resettlement Worker to support with settling into the City and a dedicated Housing Advisor from Spring Housing to support with housing advice, signposting, and support.

For guests looking to move onto independent housing; Spring Housing can support this journey through the provision of:

- weekly housing sessions to everyone through a presentation with the option to receive 1-2-1 support via a booking system with our Housing Advice Team for more in-depth and person-centred advice in relation to housing.
- housing advice - making sure Ukrainian households are aware of all the housing options in the UK.
- guidance and support around managing utility bills, such as, council tax, gas/electric, water, to be aware of what bills a responsible for in your own home and how to manage them in the long-term.

Support with completion of the move on funding application proforma (see page 9 for further information and link to the proforma).

4 weeks of tenancy outreach support to help clients/guests with their tenancies and utility bills to be set-up and monitored once they have moved into alternative accommodation.

In line with the Government guidance, it is important that hosts provide guests with two months' notice if they can no longer continue with sponsorship

arrangements. Hosts must also notify the council two months before a sponsorship arrangement ends, so that the Council with its partners can expedite support to the guest, if required, and can also start to put arrangements in place for the host to end the sponsorship agreement including ending the thank you payments.

If the host does not wish to continue on the scheme, more information can be found on the [Homes for Ukraine: sponsor guidance GOV.UK webpage](#).

[Finding a new host \(rematching\): Homes for Ukraine - GOV.UK](#)

The web address above takes you to the Ukraine sponsor guidance webpage containing information on sponsorship ending or rematching.

Options for planned accommodation moves

Remain with existing sponsor

For those being hosted, where they have not yet secured their accommodation, there will be an initial discussion to see if there is a further opportunity for the guest to remain with their existing sponsor if that sponsor is willing and able to extend the arrangement. If the sponsor agrees, then they will continue to receive the government monthly thank you payment (up to a total of 12 payments).

The caseworker(s) will continue to liaise and support both the sponsor and guests throughout that period and this support and engagement will be tailored to their needs and include options/discussions regarding longer term housing.

Formalising a rent paying arrangement

An option that may be explored with sponsors and their guests, is to see whether there is scope for a further extension beyond the 12-month period (this may be the case where placements are in self-contained homes) with some initial advice on how this could be formalised into a rent paying arrangement with a tenancy

agreement. If this is a viable option, your Spring Housing Officer is likely to refer or signpost to areas that can provide more dedicated support to drawing up an agreement.

Finding a new sponsor

If extension of an existing sponsorship placement is not possible and must end at the point which the sponsor had initially confirmed they could support a placement, guests may have identified an alternate sponsor that may be prepared to host. Often these will be found through:

- A local faith group
- Community groups
- Other Ukrainian arrivals
- Work
- A current host
- Friends

Where a guest finds their own sponsor, the guest should liaise with their Resettlement Worker if they still want to be supported under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

The relevant paperwork and checks will need to be conducted by Refugee and Migrant Centre and its partners to confirm the suitability of the host.

If the guest is having difficulty in finding an alternate sponsor or would like support, then their Resettlement Worker will look to see if an alternative sponsor can be sourced based on an existing pool of available sponsors.

Accommodation Options

Register for Social housing - Birmingham Choice

Ukrainian guests can register for the Housing Register by clicking the link below to seek social housing with Birmingham City Council or a Housing Association.

There are over 23,500 households in housing need already registered so this may take significant time (years). Joining the register may not therefore result in you being housed quickly or in your preferred area or property type.

[Housing options | Birmingham City Council](#)

As a result of the limitations in supply of Council housing we encourage households and hosts to look for options in the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

Housing Associations

Housing Association are independent, non-profit-making organisations, which provide homes for people to rent, buy or both. They offer a range of accommodation across Birmingham for all kinds of people such as homes for older people, sheltered housing, accommodation for younger people and housing for vulnerable people with specific needs.

There are a number of housing associations available within Birmingham that you can contact to register with them. Although many will be available through the Birmingham Choice website. However, their eligibility criteria are the same as council housing, which is covered above (Register for Social housing - Birmingham Choice).

Some of the more popular Housing Associations in Birmingham are:

- Citizen Housing / 0121 766 1100
- Midland Heart / 0345 602 0540
- St. Basil Centre Limited / 0121 772 2483 (18 – 24 year olds)

Access the Private Rented Sector

It is often easier, quicker, and more convenient to secure a private rented property. Landlords often advertise properties available to rent in local newspapers or newsagents windows. Letting agents and estate agents often let

and manage properties for private landlords. Popular websites that advertise homes to rent are:

- Rightmove. <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/>
- Zoopla. <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/>
- Friends and Family

Accessing Private Rented Accommodation can require things such as a rent deposit, rent in advance or other incentives, to secure a home that is affordable.

All households accessing properties within the Public Rented Sector, should give themselves approximately 1 month prior to moving to secure a property. There is an element of compliance checks and Income assessments that will need to be clarified prior to any lets.

Shared Accommodation

There are a variety of shared accommodations options available that a Ukrainian guest may wish to explore, as this may be a more affordable option. In each option, the full cost of the accommodation including any bills that are part of the arrangement, will need to be discussed and agreed with the landlord.

Renting a room from a live-in landlord

Often, a landlord will rent out a bedroom in their home. Renters can live in this room and share communal areas such as the kitchen and bathroom with the landlord. In some cases, the landlord will live with their family, so the renter will live with them too.

Online services

There are numerous reputable services offering help facilitating shared accommodation, such as: Spareroom.co.uk, myrooms.co.uk and Roomclub.com. You will need to do a little research and make sure that you trust the site you are using.

Flat/house share

The most common type of share – where a flat or house is rented by a group of sharers under a joint tenancy agreement. Every tenant in the share is responsible for paying the rent and sticking to the terms of the contract.

Renting a room directly from a landlord

A guest may be able to rent a room directly from a landlord. They should have a separate agreement with them, which means they're not responsible for any other tenants in the property.

Homes for Ukraine Move on Grant

Guests preparing to move on from their sponsor or have moved into accommodation can access one-off payments of up to £3,000 - £4,000 to help with their move.

Eligibility

The move on funding grant is available for Ukrainian households who are:

- Being hosted under the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Birmingham
- Have been hosted in Birmingham from their arrival on the scheme

Funding available

- If your household has 1 to 3 guests, you can get up to £3,000
- If your household has 4 guests, you can get up to £3,500
- If your household has 5 guests or more, you can get up to £4,000

The above funding is the maximum funding that can be claimed against what you have spent or need to spend to secure a property.

What the funds cover

- Holding deposit fee, rent deposit invoice or receipt (tenancy deposit scheme), rent in advance

- Furniture, white goods, household goods, delivery, moving costs
- Initial bills – energy, water, council tax (setting up and getting established).

How to apply

The form (proforma), including guidance on how to complete can be accessed [here](#).

The form can be viewed in English, Ukrainian and Russian. To select the appropriate language please choose from the drop down located directly above the form title which automatically shows as ‘English (United Kingdom)’.

If you require support to complete the proforma or understand your eligibility, please contact your Spring Housing Advisor who will assist you with this.

When can a claim be made

A household can apply for access to the funds either at the point of trying to secure accommodation so these can be transferred direct to the landlord and/or in some cases for elements like furniture/white goods these can be claimed for after the event with proof of purchase. If the claim is being made after the event (including after moving into the accommodation), this should be done within 12 weeks of the hosted arrangements coming to an end.

If a guest has found a potential property where the landlord is willing to consider letting but this require access to the funds available, please contact a Spring Housing advisor (this can be done via the Resettlement caseworker) or complete the claim form (link to form can be found on previous page under ‘How to apply’). Do not make commitments of payments to a landlord on behalf of or expecting Birmingham City Council to make a repayment where you have not already got express approval for this.

For further information, please contact a Spring Housing advisor.

The Local Housing Allowance (for private renters)

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate is used to work out the amount you will receive in either Housing Benefits or Universal Credit Housing Element towards your rent if you are entitled to one of these benefits. If the household has sufficient income (e.g. paid employment or other support) to evidence that a rent is affordable to them then the LHA rate may not matter in deciding what rent is affordable.

However, if the household is dependent upon Housing Benefit or Universal Credit the LHA rate is an important indicator of what rent is affordable. An affordability check will be undertaken to ensure that the household can afford to pay the rent on an ongoing basis. There will also be a suitability check, ensuring the property is the right size for the household. The LHA rates for Birmingham are set out below. To find out more about Local Housing Allowance specific to Birmingham you can [visit this webpage](#). The LHA rates vary between different Local Authority areas.

<i>Number of bedrooms</i>	Weekly amount	Monthly amount
<i>1 bedroom with sheltered facilities</i>	£67.00	£291.13
<i>1 bedroom self-contained</i>	£120.82	£524.99
<i>2 bedrooms</i>	£143.84	£625.02
<i>3 bedrooms</i>	£155.34	£674.99
<i>4 or more bedrooms</i>	£195.62	£850.02

These rates show the maximum amount that can be awarded – the actual benefit you receive may be less depending on the amount of money you have coming in and if other adults (other than your partner, if you have one) live with you. The maximum LHA rate payable is for 4 bedrooms, regardless of how many bedrooms you have.

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/lha> - This webpage provides Local Housing Allowance information specific to Birmingham.

[Local Housing Allowance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-local-housing-allowance-rates-are-set-and-used-to-work-out-housing-benefit) – This webpage provides guidance on How Local Housing Allowance rates are set and used to work out Housing Benefit.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/benefits/local_housing_allowance_lha_for_private_renters - This webpage provides housing advice in local housing allowance for private renters.

If Housing Benefit or Universal Credit doesn't cover all your rent and you need more money, you could make a claim for a discretionary housing payment (DHP). A DHP is extra money from your local council to help pay your rent. You can get in contact with your local council to receive support with this.

It is worth looking outside of Birmingham as in some areas, rents can be more affordable such as Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Derby, Stoke-on-Trent. Birmingham City Council can still assist with help to access accommodation in these areas.

Intensive Support

The Accommodation Finding Team

Birmingham City Council has a team of officers who support homeless households to secure a home in the private rented sector. The same offer that is available to households who are facing homelessness is also made available

to households from Ukraine. The Accommodation Finding Team support can be provided to Ukrainian households following failure to secure something with the help of the move on funding i.e. those at the cusp of homelessness, or when a Ukrainian household feels unable to secure housing and additional help is needed for example, households with particularly challenging or complex needs. In these instances, support from the accommodation finding team may be used instead of utilising the move on fund.

In cases where the Accommodation Finding Team's support is required for Ukrainian households, Refugee and Migrant Centre and/or Spring Housing will initially refer the household details to the Housing Solution Service. The household, with the support of their caseworker and/or City Council officer, will then complete and submit a homeless application. The application will include a [Housing Needs Assessment](#) which will be used to inform a homeless relief plan.

On the basis of the assessment, the Accommodation Finding Team will then provide additional support alongside funds that can help to access accommodation. The options of support that may be provided are detailed below for information:

Housing Needs Assessment link embedded above:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50099/your_housing_needs_assessment/1199/i_have_an_enquiry_or_further_information_about_my_housing_needs_assessment

Option 1: Rent & Deposit Agreement

Birmingham City Council will pay 5 weeks-worth of rent as a security indemnity deposit to the landlord and the monthly rent (one month at a time) up to maximum three months in advance till welfare benefits are in payment. BCC will only pay up to three months' rent if the welfare benefit has not yet started.

Option 2: Help to Rent Insurance Scheme

For each property that a landlord offers to be let via BCC, we will pay for an annual landlord insurance. The insurance will remove the need for a tenancy deposit, credit and client referencing. The insurance also covers malicious and accidental damage and up to £12,000 rent guarantee where it has been agreed between BCC and the landlord to pursue an eviction. The insurance policy will be in the name of the landlord. <https://www.help2rent.co.uk/>

Option 3: Landlord Incentive

This is a non-refundable incentive payment to the landlord and does not act as rent deposit and rent in advance i.e. they don't have to pay it back. The incentive is offered in recognition that Local Housing Allowance rates are lower than what landlords can often secure in the market.

As an indication we would start by looking at incentives as follows:

- 1 bed flat – £1000 incentive
- 2 bed property – £2000 incentive
- 3 bed property – £2,500 incentive
- 4 bed property – £3,000 incentive

It is possible for options to be combined, this is subject to getting the best deal with a landlord and for the tenant.

All properties let must have current, Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), Gas and Electricity certificate. The landlord must issue an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) to the household who will occupy the property. Usually, the Accommodation Finding Team will seek a minimum of a 2-year tenancy, however due to the uncertain circumstances relating to the situation in Ukraine shorter tenancies (not less than 6 months) may be acceptable.

Where a tenant is dependent on Housing Benefits to pay the housing costs, they will be required to request that their rent is paid directly to the landlord. The Accommodation Finding Team can assist with that claim. Refugee and Migrant

Centre and/or Spring Housing advisors will be able to refer in the team if this support is required.

Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

If you must leave hosted accommodation and have not secured alternative accommodation, then you will need to approach the Housing Solution Service to complete a Housing Needs Assessment. This may result in Birmingham City Council needing to accommodate you in emergency accommodation, this could be a B&B (often outside of Birmingham) and then in another type of temporary accommodation. This situation can last many months and is something we wish to avoid by planning and working together. Please see link below to request a Housing Needs Assessment.

[I have an enquiry or further information about my housing needs assessment | Birmingham City Council](#)

Unplanned moves

This section provides information on the different response options available when sponsor and host arrangements breakdown.

Mediation and Support

It is acknowledged there can be difficulties between hosts and guests who have not known each other previously, especially where they may be from diverse cultural backgrounds. Refugee and Migrant Centre, through case workers, will offer mediation where there is a difference of opinion or a breakdown in communication between sponsors and their guests. It is important in the first instance, for either party to contact their caseworker (Refugee and Migrant Centre for guests and RMC for sponsors) who will mediate on behalf of both parties and provide appropriate translation services. They can help to agree 'house rules' so both parties are clear about expectations or can bring in specialist services if required.

It is important to acknowledge that unplanned moves are distressing for both guests and their sponsors and there are extremely limited options for providing short term accommodation in those circumstances. Pressure on accessing these short-term options is increasing continually because there are a substantial number of homeless cases in Birmingham who also need access to temporary housing.

Guests are encouraged to not leave their existing placements without discussing the reasons for this with both their sponsor and their dedicated caseworker so that appropriate planned solutions can be progressed.

Where these options have been exhausted and sponsor breakdown has happened, guests and their sponsors will be encouraged to agree a timeframe for an alternative rehousing solution to be secured, enabling the guest to remain where they are in the short term, if it is safe to do so.

Immediate breakdown

Where a Ukrainian guest must leave a sponsor home immediately (i.e. the same day), the caseworker will support the guest with the following:

Rematching

Initially look to see if an alternative sponsor can be sourced from based on an existing pool of available sponsors. If the initial breakdown is as a result of the guest behaviour with a previous sponsor, then the caseworker may deem rematching not to be a suitable option.

Based on the requirements (i.e. size and composition of family, special needs, location), if available, one prospective sponsor will be offered that most suits the guests' requirements. It should be noted that the location may vary.

The caseworker will contact any prospective sponsor first to seek their agreement to start rematching process. For those sponsors that have already

previously hosted, the caseworker will confirm the remaining duration of the arrangement that they will be eligible for the thank you payment.

If the sponsor agrees, the caseworker will facilitate the introduction between the sponsor and guest.

We recognise this might be a distressing time. The caseworker will provide immediate support such as facilitate transport if needed.

If the guest has moved to a different area than the original location the caseworker will discuss and provide support around the following:

- Schools – remaining at existing school or support with changing schools
- Familiarity of local amenities

Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

If you must leave hosted accommodation and have not secured alternative accommodation, then you will need to approach Refugee and Migrant Centre or your Spring Housing advisor to ask for support. Refugee and Migrant Centre and/or Spring Housing will initially refer the household details to Birmingham City Councils Housing Solution Service Team to undertake a Housing Assessment Needs (as outlined on page 14).

Useful information & links

[Rightmove - UK's number one property website for properties for sale and to rent](#) and [Zoopla > Search Property to Buy, Rent, House Prices, Estate Agents](#) – Use these websites to search for private homes to rent.

[Spare Room: Find Roommates, Rooms for Rent & Sublets](#) – This website can be used to search for roommates and rooms to rent in the UK.

[Home - Birmingham City Council \(birminghamchoice.co.uk\)](http://birminghamchoice.co.uk) – This is Birmingham’s social housing website; you will need to register as the first step.

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk> – Search:

- Housing Associations
- Supported Living
- Understanding your rent statement
- Local Housing Allowance (LHA rates)
- Making a Housing Benefit or Council Tax support claim
- Extra help with your housing costs (DHP and Tenancy Deposit Scheme)

[Holiday Homes & Apartment Rentals - Airbnb](#) – This website provides properties on a short term let basis (up to 28 days)

[DSS Properties to Rent, DSS Housing, Find a Rental Property, DSS Rent \(dssmove.co.uk\)](#) – This website supports households in receipt of benefits find a property

[Houses and apartments for sale and for rent - Trovit](#) – This website allows you to search for private homes to rent

[DSSaccepted Housing in the UK](#) – This website is primarily for tenants using council housing benefit allowance

[Moving Soon Affordable Housing](#) – This website caters for a range of tenants from those using council housing benefit, to those who have no deposit.

The following Linktree webpage provides links to the key websites that have been mentioned throughout this brochure.

Linktree website address: <https://linktr.ee/homes4ukraine>

Important Information

Rent - Money you agree to pay the landlord for the right to live in your home. The amount you pay will depend on your agreement with the landlord and what you can afford.

Bills - Find out whether payments for gas, electric, water and phone services are included in the rent or whether you will need to pay the suppliers yourself

If you get Income Support or Job Seekers' Allowance, or if you are on a low income, you can claim Local Housing Allowance to help you pay your rent. These pay for accommodation only and do not cover charges for heating, lighting, food, or care that may be included in your rent. Before agreeing to take on a tenancy you should check the amount of Local Housing Allowance (as set out on page 10) you will get for the size of property you are planning to rent.

As a tenant you are contractually obliged to pay your rent, and this should be your priority above most other expenses. If you are evicted for rent arrears and apply for homeless assistance you may not be offered assistance if it is found out that you did not pay your rent when you could have done so. This includes if it is felt that you spent money on non-essential things rather than paying your rent.

For information on Housing Benefit, please refer to the Benefit Service. You can also receive advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Information on benefits can be found at GOV.UK by visiting the following web address: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

Housing guidelines state:

Two people should not be in one room unless they are:

- adult cohabiting partners
- a parent and child
- two siblings of the same gender if aged over 10
- two siblings regardless of gender if aged under 10

Your Housing Rights

- By law you are entitled to a written agreement – occupancy agreement when you rent a property in the UK which outlines the amount of rent to be paid, property information, length of tenancy and notice dates for example.
- The landlord must also provide written contact details, including address for them or their agent.
- The amount of rent you pay, when and for how long should be detailed in your tenancy agreement.
- The deposit you pay must by law be protected in one of the three government authorised tenancy deposit schemes.
- Your landlord or agent cannot just drop in as and when they wish or carry out repairs on the property without making prior arrangements with you. They should give you at least 24hrs notice.
- Your landlord or agent is not responsible for undertaking improvements to your home, but they are responsible for repairs that pose a health and safety risk to tenants.