

Relocating 50 Syrian refugees in the Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Information sheet for potential landlords on providing rental properties for vulnerable Syrian refugees.

If you are interested in renting a property to a Syrian refugee household and would like to find out more information, you can contact **Brian Castle, Assistant Director, Community Services Operations on 020 8891 7482** or Email: b.castle@richmond.gov.uk who will be able to advise you further

Who are the Syrian refugees considered under this scheme?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees identifies Syrian refugees to be put forward for the relocation scheme. They are screened for security and assessed to meet the criteria including being

- 1) Victims of torture or violence,
- 2) Women and girls at risk, and
- 3) Having physical or medical needs

The vulnerable people being resettled will fit into one or more of these categories. Their religious backgrounds will vary. Some will speak English and some will not. In the main, they will speak Arabic and have a good level of education.

What will they need?

A secure and self contained property in the Borough of Richmond upon Thames with its own front door let on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy for at least 12 months. If you are able to offer a property for 2-3 years this would be ideal.

How will their rent be paid?

The Council can pay an initial holding deposit to keep the property vacant for up to 2 months until the refugee household can take up their tenancy, this payment will be funded through the Home Office relocation scheme. One month's deposit can be provided in advance on signing the tenancy. Once the refugee household arrives, they will be entitled to claim housing benefit to meet the rent. The rent agreed on the tenancy must be within the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates applicable for a property in Richmond, limited to that appropriate to the size of property but not exceeding LHA levels for a two bedroom property. Please visit this website link for more information and also see further information below:

<http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx>

Due to welfare benefit capping restrictions, rent levels under the scheme must be set within the relevant Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate applicable to the size of accommodation provided but limited to that of a two-bedroom sized property in the area the property is located. LHA rates are set until March 2020 for two bedroom sized property, two different rates apply to properties within Richmond

£1,215 within Outer South West London Broad Rental Market Area

£912 within Outer South London Broad Rental Market Area

A postcode search on the link <http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx> will identify which LHA rate applies for Richmond properties.

To compensate for the lower rent levels, a 'one off' landlord's premium payment of £1,750 can be made in the first year. There may be a further premium payment available for renewing a tenancy after 12 months.

Refugees will have a caseworker allocated to them on arrival who will support them to ensure their housing benefit claim is made immediately.

Will the property need to be furnished?

Refugees usually arrive with very little. They will not have money or knowledge of the systems to help furnish the property themselves, so it will help if basic furnishings are provided as part of the letting. White goods such as a fridge will also be required. However, if the property is unfurnished and there are no white goods, the cost of providing these **will be met by the scheme** and if required, can be arranged by the Council. It will help if the property is furnished (without any personal effects) as this will preserve the funding to be used to furnish other homes.

Please note any furnishings or white goods provided will need to comply with current safety standards.

There is also a budget for decorating your property to bring it up to the required standard. The Council can advise further on this.

Who will I deal with in the Council if I have questions now or once they arrive?

Brian Castle, Assistant Director, Community Services Operations on 020 8891 7482 or Email:

b.castle@richmond.gov.uk

The Borough of Richmond upon Thames Housing Department will act as broker on your behalf. You can liaise with the housing case worker for any issues that may arise.