



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# Homes for Ukraine: framework for accommodation

Guidance on what local authorities need to consider when rehousing people from Ukraine.

**First published:** 19 May 2022

**Last updated:** 23 January 2024

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# Introduction

The framework is part of our collection of guidance for local authorities. The framework sets out how people who arrive via the Welsh Government Super Sponsor route and those accommodated in initial accommodation are dispersed across Wales and supported into longer-term accommodation.

The framework also provides the principles local authorities need to consider when rehousing people from Ukraine either from initial accommodation or where existing placements have broken down.

Finally, it covers the direct allocation of Super Sponsor arrivals straight into host arrangements, rather than into initial accommodation.

The framework applies to those coming under:

1. the Welsh Government's Super Sponsor route
2. the Homes for Ukraine scheme
3. the Ukraine Family visa scheme

The framework has been developed to provide over-arching principles to help local authorities with the challenging process of balancing our commitment to the people from Ukraine and homeless households in temporary accommodation.

Wales is a Nation of Sanctuary, and we are offering accommodation and support to individuals and families fleeing Ukraine in recognition of our common humanity and to provide stability at this very difficult time. We recognise the considerable pressures currently on housing capacity across Wales, with more people than ever in temporary accommodation who also need to move into permanent housing. We acknowledge that local authorities are navigating additional pressures caused by Home Office movement and accommodation of other sanctuary seekers in Wales.

People from Ukraine who have been granted a visa will have up to 3 years' leave to remain in the UK. Therefore, longer-term solutions should be sought for rehousing people from initial accommodation, which includes hosting arrangements, the private rented sector, transitional accommodation and in some cases social housing. B and B, Airbnb and hotel accommodation would not be considered a suitable longer-term solution. Ukrainian visa holders have a right to move and settle anywhere across the UK.

## Over-arching principles

This framework provides some over-arching principles, within which we expect local authorities to operate. It is for local authorities to apply this within a local context, exercising professional judgement, consistent with existing legal and policy frameworks.

The key over-arching principles are:

- local authorities with initial accommodation in their area are responsible for undertaking housing needs assessments (including affordability assessments) for all guests, so that the guests can be supported to move on effectively. However, local authorities who host initial accommodation are not responsible for rehousing all occupants in their area
- local authorities will work collaboratively to support the move on of guests from initial accommodation across Wales and ensure that move on continues to be an ongoing process
- the Welsh Government is responsible for determining the fair and proportionate 'distribution' of Super Sponsor arrivals in initial accommodation to local authorities across Wales
- all appropriate longer-term move on options should be considered for anyone whose initial placement (in initial accommodation or with sponsors) has ended or broken down, such as hosting, private rented sector

accommodation, and social housing including transitional accommodation. Rehousing people in initial accommodation venues will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and with the consent of the Welsh Government

- individual housing preferences of guests may be taken into consideration, but it should be made clear that it cannot be guaranteed that preferences can be accommodated given housing pressures across Wales
- once people leave their initial accommodation and arrive in a local authority area, the relevant local authority will be responsible for assessing any need for homelessness assistance in the same way as for other individuals eligible for housing and homelessness services
- local authorities are responsible for ‘allocating’ housing to individuals and families where placement breakdowns occur; when doing this, local authorities must be mindful of the needs of all populations in housing need in their area, particularly those in temporary accommodation
- local authorities should consider community cohesion when rehousing people
- local authorities will be responsible for ensuring all hosts have been subject to necessary Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local safeguarding checks and property inspections have taken place in all properties, as quickly as reasonably practicable

## Direct allocation to hosts

People arriving in Wales via the Super Sponsor route will, wherever possible, be directly allocated to pre-vetted hosts prior to their arrival in the UK. The Wales Nation of Sanctuary: Ukraine Contact Centre (the “Contact Centre”) will coordinate the direct allocation to hosts and the associated local authority. This will include conducting an initial housing needs assessment with people once a visa has been issued and in advance of them travelling to the UK. This will allow the Contact Centre to identify any other requirements, for example, educational, religious, special dietary requirements. Local authorities are expected to work

with the Contact Centre to facilitate a match to a host. If a suitable host is not available, or a host arrangement is not appropriate due to specific complex housing requirements, or where individuals arriving from Ukraine are being reunited with their family, people will be offered initial accommodation provided by the Welsh Government.

Guidance for [local authorities on direct allocation of guests to host](#).

## Initial accommodation and move on

### Key expectations

Local authorities with initial accommodation venues in their area are expected to:

- undertake a housing needs assessment, including an affordability assessment, of all guests residing in initial accommodation and work with those guests throughout their stay in initial accommodation to identify move on options across Wales. Move on to longer-term accommodation should be a continuous process and should not be predicated by the rationalisation of initial accommodation
- engage with local authorities across Wales to identify move on options for guests to manage guests' expectations around the importance of moving on to longer term accommodation as well as the local authorities' capacity to meet housing preferences
- ensure guests understand that they need to follow the [Code of Conduct](#) when residing in initial accommodation
- implement the Welsh Government policies and procedures to support guests to move on, including the guidance on managing breaches to the Code (see annex c for the guidance) and implementation of the Offers of Accommodation Refusals Policy of (see annex B for full policy)

All local authorities are expected to proactively participate in the Team Wales approach to support other local authorities with move on from initial accommodation, which would include identifying hosts, supporting with identifying and securing private rental properties or other accommodation (such as transitional accommodation) that help meet guests needs.

Local authorities receiving guests from initial accommodation are expected to assess any need for homelessness assistance in the same way as for other individuals eligible for housing and homelessness services.

## **Initial accommodation**

As part of the Super Sponsor process, we have established a range of initial accommodation across Wales. Our initial accommodation is now being rationalised as guests move on to longer-term accommodation. Local authorities that originally hosted people in initial accommodation are not responsible for rehousing them all in their area, though we anticipate that a proportionate share of occupants would remain in the host local authority.

Instead, a key principle of our approach is that there will be a fair and proportionate move on of people from initial accommodation across Wales, and local authorities will work collaboratively to support move on of guests from initial accommodation.

## **Move on from initial accommodation**

Welsh Government and local authorities have agreed a pan-Wales response with all local authorities committed to playing their part in offering accommodation fairly and proportionately to their circumstances.

To facilitate this, a population-based formula was developed and agreed in May

2022. This formula has been updated to recognise:

- the number of Super Sponsor arrivals
- the population of the local area as at the 2021 census
- the number of individuals under the individual Homes for Ukraine route already being supported in the local area
- the number of people homeless in temporary accommodation in the local area (based on a 3-month average)
- existing asylum dispersal data in the 4 main asylum dispersal areas (Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham and Newport) prior to the roll-out of the All Wales Asylum Dispersal Plan

More detailed information is available in [annex a](#). This formula, known as 'the population share', will be used as a guide to the move on distribution of Super Sponsor arrivals from initial accommodation to local authorities across Wales. We continue to work with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) who have an overall monitoring role around where people have been rehoused and Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP). Given the fast-paced nature of this work, and wider housing pressures the formula will be reviewed regularly.

Local authorities will work with guests who are in initial accommodation in their respective areas to identify and capture any housing needs, along with other key information, that should also be considered when determining where to support people to move on to. Other key information, may include:

- family make up
- education requirements
- employment
- affordability

This information will then be shared with other local authorities as an initial step in matching people to suitable longer-term accommodation. In making suitable offers of accommodation, every effort should be made to ensure that the



property meets the family or individual's specific needs.

Where suitable accommodation is secured out of county, the local authority with the initial accommodation will work with the receiving local authority to support move on. All local authorities are being provided with additional move on funding from the Welsh Government. This funding is complementary to Wales' share of the £150 million being provided by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which is intended to support move on and to prevent homelessness. Our Discretionary Assistance Fund is intended to support local authorities to assist guests in initial accommodation to move into longer-term accommodation. This might include support for guests securing or moving into private rented accommodation (both within and outside the local authority) such as providing bonds and furnishing the property. Full guidance on the funding [Discretionary Assistance Fund \(DAF\)](#).

The family should be given at least 1 week to move to their new home and sign appropriate paperwork relating to the type of home they have been offered. Where needed, the local authority should arrange for an interpreter to discuss information and advice to explain what they are agreeing to in the paperwork.

Local authorities may wish to consider involving relevant third sector agencies to support guests with securing and transitioning to longer-term accommodation.

Whilst guests' preferences for move on accommodation may be considered, these are not the same as housing needs and it will not always be possible to accommodate them. For example, a preference from a guest might include a certain location or type of accommodation.

Where reasonable offers of move on accommodation, based on housing needs, are rejected by a guest, the refusals policy should be applied (see annex c). [The Code of Conduct](#) clearly sets out that if guests incur a move on charge because they have refused 2 or more offers of accommodation, they are required to pay the charge. Furthermore, the Code makes clear that all guests

residing in initial accommodation are required to cooperate with staff supporting them to find longer term accommodation. If guests fail to follow the Code of Conduct the local authority needs to refer to the guidance on managing breaches to the Code (annex c).

## Offers of accommodation: refusals policy

To support and help guests move on into longer term accommodation and to align as far as possible with the support provided for other groups in housing, we have introduced a refusals policy that applies to offers of move on accommodation. The policy sets out what constitutes a reasonable offer, taking into account family size, specific health needs, and reasons that accommodation could be refused or appealed against. Under this policy if individuals/families in initial accommodation refuse two reasonable offers of accommodation they will be placed onto the charging framework attracting a weekly charge to reflect the additional administration costs of trying to identify further longer-term accommodation options.

The full policy is outlined in [annex b](#).

## Allocation of housing

We recognise that local authorities are best placed to understand a household's housing needs and make decisions on allocation of accommodation for people who are settling into their area from initial accommodation, from other routes to Wales or where existing hosting arrangements have broken down.

Local authorities should:

- maintain an up-to-date list of all properties available in their area for

matching and note when a property match is made. The Welsh Government will provide updated information on potential hosts as it becomes available

- ensure host expressions of interest (EOI's) are available for all local authorities to consider when looking to move on guests from initial accommodation or re-match guests to hosts
- ensure all private rented sector landlords offering accommodation have complied with the registrations and licensing requirements under Part 1 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- establish with the landlord or agent if they will consider letting the property to people in temporary accommodation
- carry out property inspections on shared host accommodation
- carry out DBS and local safeguarding checks on household members before move on to host accommodation
- all offers of accommodation should be matched to the person/family in the greatest housing need where people and property size matches

## Hosting arrangements

The local authority is responsible for:

- carrying out property, DBS and local safeguarding checks on host accommodation
- ensuring that hosts understand that they cannot charge rent for the accommodation but that they should discuss and agree any expectation around financial contributions to household running costs with their guests
- providing assistance to hosts to claim the £500 per month 'thank you' payment

The [Homes for Ukraine: guidance for hosts and sponsors](#) includes full details regarding hosting arrangements and 'thank you' payments for hosts.

## Re-matching

In circumstances where the local authority considers it necessary to find a new hosting arrangement for a person or family from Ukraine, this may be because:

- it is not viable for the Ukrainian guest(s) to stay where they are
- of failed DBS, local safeguarding or accommodation checks
- the original period of hosting has come to an end and hosts are not able to extend these arrangements any further

Before guests from Ukraine can be re-matched to any host, local authorities should undertake relevant DBS, local safeguarding and accommodation checks in advance of move-in. Post move in checks are also necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all parties.

For this reason, it is imperative that local authorities initiate the relevant checks to enable people and families to find settled accommodation with prospective hosts who have confirmed their interest in hosting a person or family from Ukraine. The [Homes for Ukraine: guidance for hosts and sponsors](#) includes full details of necessary safeguarding checks.

The guests from Ukraine should also be informed that checks need to take place before they move to the new accommodation and the local authority will contact them once completed. This may mean that temporary accommodation will need to be found during this period.

In some instances, the host and guest may have identified alternative hosts. In such situations the local authority should seek to determine who these new hosts will be and their address so that either appropriate DBS and local safeguarding checks can be carried out, or (if the new host resides in another local authority area) pass the case across to the other local authority to undertake the appropriate safeguarding and property checks.

If re-matching guests from Ukraine to a host who has previously sponsored on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, local authorities will not be required to undertake additional checks in advance if they do not judge them necessary.

If a sponsorship has broken down due to concerns over the quality of accommodation or safeguarding issues related to the host, that host should not be considered for re-matching.

## **Properties that are let unfurnished or without suitable or adequate floor coverings**

Information on furniture and floor covering options will be provided to the individual/family by the local authority offering the accommodation; this will include local furniture recycling and flooring charities and any public funds which they may be eligible to apply for including the **Discretionary Assistance Fund**.

Where people are offered a new home, there should be appropriate offers of support to help them adjust to life in Wales with support from the local authority teams or tenancy support to help with this transition. Housing Justice Cymru and Welsh Refugee Council have also been commissioned to work with local authorities and Ukrainian people to offer expert advice and support, and their services can be accessed as an additional resource where this is helpful for local authorities.

## **Emergency placements**

Where people present at homelessness services or are identified as requiring emergency accommodation, it remains the responsibility of the local authority to identify suitable accommodation in their area.

Initial accommodation should only be considered as an emergency placement mechanism where all other options have been exhausted. It has been designed to provide capacity to support those arriving via the Super Sponsor route and not as a mechanism for emergency placements.

In such circumstances, the local authority must contact [Wales Nation of Sanctuary admin team](#) to seek approval for the use of the initial accommodation. The Welsh Government will consider the request quickly and may provide approval where there is an exceptional need and a plan for securing more appropriate accommodation is in place. In these rare circumstances, the responsibility for accommodating the individuals will remain with the local authority, who will be expected to urgently source a suitable local solution.

## Increasing accommodation capacity

Whilst the responsibility for accommodating individuals rests with local authorities we are looking to increase the accommodation options available to local authorities.

## Hosting Wales: expressions of interest (EOI's) from hosts

In response to the crisis in Ukraine we have been working to establish accommodation offers to assist local authorities to identify suitable hosts for Ukrainian citizens and families who have come to Wales to seek sanctuary through the following:

- Homes for Ukraine:
  - individual sponsor route
  - Welsh Government Super Sponsor route

- Family Sponsor Scheme

We are keen to increase the number of hosts across Wales, particularly in urban areas and from those able to accommodate larger families and pets. We encourage local authorities to use the hosting communications toolkit provided by the Welsh Government and encourage **expressions of interest** for introduction to hosting training and to register for further details.

We have contacted everyone in Wales who had previously submitted an expression of interest (EOI) to the UK Government and those who made an offer direct to the Welsh Government. These are from prospective hosts in Wales who have confirmed their interest in hosting a person or family from Ukraine. This data has been made available to local authorities to follow up and draw on hosts locally.

For every expression of interest that could become a host offer, local authorities are expected to carry out property checks, DBS and local safeguarding checks as per current expectations for hosts. **Read the Homes for Ukraine: safeguarding and modern slavery guidance.**

Local authorities should commence checks as soon as possible in order to ensure a pipeline of verified hosts that are ready to accommodate people as the need arises.

The data made available to local authorities can be used at local authority discretion, regardless of the sponsor scheme used for a visa application, to match people and families from Ukraine to a host in Wales. For example, hosts may be used to accommodate individuals or families who:

- having sought a visa through the Welsh Government Super Sponsor route, are being settled in the local area as they move on from initial accommodation
- having sought a visa via the Homes for Ukraine Individual Sponsor route, are

unable to remain with their original sponsor/host (described as ‘re-matching’)

## Private rented sector

We are working with Rent Smart Wales and landlord representative groups to encourage landlords with available properties to come forward directly to local authorities. Where Welsh Government is made aware of available properties, we will share this information with the applicable local authority.

Properties made available to the local authority in the private rented sector can be used for all those in housing need. Local authorities need to consider how these properties will be allocated to ensure parity of treatment across different groups in housing need. This is also applicable to properties made available through Leasing Scheme Wales.

Local authorities should establish that landlords have met registration and licensing requirements with Rent Smart Wales under Part 1 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, and ensure properties are allocated within suitability regulations.

## Social housing and increases to stock

Local authorities and Registered Social Landlords should continue to allocate housing based on housing need. This should already include a focus on letting properties to households currently living in temporary accommodation across Wales in line with the Minister for Climate Change’s statement in **November 2021**.

There are significant numbers of homeless people currently housed within temporary accommodation in Wales, with demand for social housing far



outweighing supply, and with durations of placements in temporary accommodation increasing. Assessment of housing need must be a priority contributing factor in allocating social housing.

## **The Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) Grant**

We are working with local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to increase the amount of social housing available in Wales by bringing properties back into use and by providing support for the development of new high quality longer term housing.

The Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) was launched to help facilitate this and is intended to support everyone in housing need. Under the terms of the funding, these properties may be let to all those in housing need, including Ukrainians in initial accommodation under the Super Sponsor route. Accommodation funded through TACP can also be used to provide housing for Ukrainians who have entered Wales via other routes.

Over £76 million was made available for the financial year 2022 to 2023 and is expected to deliver nearly 1,000 additional homes. It is for local authorities to determine how additional homes delivered using TACP funding are used to support move on from temporary accommodation based on their local needs and circumstances.

This additional housing supply is to provide support for anyone in housing need and local authorities should be mindful of community cohesion when determining use.

## Legal duties and eligibility

Part 2 of the [Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) outlines the statutory duty placed on local authorities to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

We recognise that local authorities have the local housing knowledge and are best placed to ensure housing need is met in their local area. The Home Office has made changes to the Immigration Rules to specify routes for Ukrainian people to settle in the UK via 3 principal Schemes:

- the Ukraine Family Scheme, which will allow immediate and extended family members of British citizens, UK settled persons and others to come from Ukraine to, or stay in, the UK
- the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, which will allow Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family to come to the UK where they have an approved sponsor who has agreed to provide accommodation. This includes those who come under the Welsh Government 'Super Sponsor' Scheme
- the Ukraine Extension Scheme, which will allow Ukrainian nationals with their partners and children in the UK with permission on 18 March 2022 (including those who have overstayed by a short period) to stay in the UK

In order to provide immediate support for people initially arriving, or who were in Wales before the start of the war, 'leave outside the rules' was granted.

This gave households immediate access to benefits and services, including housing and homelessness assistance, without fulfilling the habitual residence test. The 3 Schemes, which regularise the 'leave outside the rules' arrangements, make successful applicants eligible for social housing and homelessness assistance as permitted by The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 which amended the 2014 Regulations to give these groups eligibility for homelessness

assistance and social housing from 28 April 2022.

People arriving under any of the UK Government's Ukraine visa schemes have the right to access housing and homelessness services in the same way as other people in Wales. As such, where people do not have access to housing, or their initial host placement breaks down or is deemed unsuitable, the responsibility for addressing their housing needs rests with the local authority.

As is the case with the UK Government, the Welsh Government is unable to play a direct role in accommodating people under the Family Visa Scheme or Homes for Ukraine Visa Scheme and regards any accommodation issues as matters to be resolved by local authorities.

Ultimately, the visa scheme that an individual applies under does not determine or limit the types of accommodation individuals can access or be moved onto.

There are however different types of financial support attached to different visas. Financial support for the various visa schemes is available at [Homes for Ukraine: funding](#).

## **Statutory homelessness duties**

Local authorities' statutory homelessness duties are likely to apply in instances of early sponsorship breakdown, except in cases of direct allocation which should be referred to Welsh Government for further advice. Local authorities may be able to end a homelessness prevention or relief duty owed to a Ukrainian beneficiary by facilitating a rematch, provided the placement and accommodation are suitable and there is a reasonable prospect of it continuing to be available for at least 6 months.

In the unfortunate event that a hosting relationship breaks down, people and families from Ukraine may present themselves to local authorities for

homelessness assistance. Local authorities must continue to consider their statutory homelessness duties in full. A homelessness assessment must be undertaken by the local authority, and this should take account of the individual circumstances of each household when assessing if an individual is homeless, and if so when considering if accommodation (temporary accommodation and/or longer-term settled accommodation) is appropriate. As statutory homeless duties apply to local authorities, they are encouraged to seek their own internal legal advice in scenarios where they require clarity on a point of law when taking such decisions.

In instances where individuals on the Super Sponsor route are made an offer of further initial accommodation, but the individual or family choose to present as homeless to a local authority, it is still the local authority's statutory duty to undertake a homelessness assessment to inform a legitimate decision. As a part of this process local authorities will be required to take decisions in relation to eligibility, intentionality and local connection.

The local authority should however explore and explain all options to the individual presenting, including detailing where existing offers of accommodation are deemed suitable. A refusal of an offer will be taken into account by the authority in their assessment and may have a detrimental impact on assessment outcomes. It should be noted that initial accommodation does not establish local connection, and therefore guests may be eligible for assistance in a local authority other than that of their initial accommodation.

## Support and guidance

People coming from Ukraine will need support as they transition into their new homes in Wales. Local authorities will need to assess the support needs of people from Ukraine being housed in their area and make links to support for the people moving to Wales and for people who are hosting. This is a fast moving

area of work and guidance is regularly updated, we recommend checking the Welsh Government website for the latest advice and information related to [helping and supporting people from Ukraine](#). Further guidance is available for local authorities on their roles in the delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Wales [Homes for Ukraine: guidance for local authorities](#).

People coming from Ukraine should also be encouraged to become familiar with our [Sanctuary website](#), which can help with a range of queries they may have about life in Wales, such as driving licence queries, educational and employment information, and lots more information based on questions we have found are important to our Ukrainian guests. The website will help people to overcome barriers in accessing support.

Guidance of the funding streams available to local authorities to support Ukrainian people coming to Wales under the [Homes for Ukraine: funding](#).

## Informing the Welsh Government and UK Government of changes

### Welsh Government

General query email: [Wales Nation of Sanctuary admin team](#)

Safeguarding only email: [Ukraine.Safeguarding@gov.wales](mailto:Ukraine.Safeguarding@gov.wales).

### UK Government

Local authorities can log in to JIRA [via the portal](#). Alternatively call the telephone desk: 0303 444 4445.

Opening hours: 09:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday except bank holidays.

## Annex a: population allocation

In May 2022 all local authorities and the Welsh Government agreed the original Homes for Ukraine Accommodation Framework.

This sets out how Ukrainians who arrive via the Welsh Government Super Sponsor route and who are accommodated in initial accommodation would be dispersed across Wales. As part of this every local authority agreed a population share of Ukrainian arrivals under the Super Sponsor route that they would support into longer term accommodation as part of our Team Wales approach. This recognised the uneven distribution of initial accommodation across Wales and provided assurance to the local authorities supporting initial accommodation in their local area that they would not have responsibility for the longer-term accommodation of all Ukrainians via the Super Sponsor in initial accommodation.

In consultation with local authorities this population share has now been updated and the allocation formula is a weighted formula based on a combination of the:

- **population of the local authority** (55%)
- individuals under the individual Homes for Ukraine route already being supported in the local area (15%)
- number of homelessness in temporary accommodation in the local area (based on a 3 month average) (25%)
- the number of asylum seekers housed in the 4 main dispersal areas (Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham) prior to the roll out of the Wales Asylum Dispersal Plan in Sept 2022 (5%)

The figures below give an estimated number of people each local authority could

expect to support into longer term accommodation from the 3,000 people expected to come to Wales via the Super Sponsor route. This is intended to be an 18-month approach that sets a framework for all local authorities to make progress towards supporting their population share into longer term accommodation. The Welsh Government will monitor data to ensure that all local authorities are assisting with the rehousing of people from initial accommodation and will review the population share model regularly to reflect any significant changes in wider housing pressures.

## Population share allocation

Area	Population share allocation
Wales	3000
Isle of Anglesey	69
Gwynedd	112
Conwy	80
Denbighshire	87
Flintshire	190
Wrexham	141
Powys	113
Ceredigion	64

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<b>Area</b>	<b>Population share allocation</b>
Pembrokeshire	74
Carmarthenshire	206
Swansea	241
Neath Port Talbot	149
Bridgend	142
Vale of Glamorgan	124
Cardiff	300
Rhondda Cynon Taff	304
Merthyr Tydfil	40
Caerphilly	211
Blaenau Gwent	77
Torfaen	96
Monmouthshire	53
Newport	127

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# Annex b: offers of accommodation refusals policy

## Context

The Offers of Accommodation Refusals Policy was introduced on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023, with the primary aim of increasing move on from initial accommodation, whilst also supporting a consistent national approach and imposing consequences for refusing reasonable offers of accommodation. The policy introduced a charging framework for families or individuals that refuse two or more reasonable offers of accommodation. Following a review of the policy with a cross section of local authorities and welcome centres, the Offers of Accommodation Refusals Policy has been revised as of 7 August 2023.

The Offers of Accommodation Refusals Policy forms part of a package of comprehensive support, for both local authorities and guests. The policy is applicable to offers of onward accommodation including hosting arrangements, and privately rented accommodation. Supporting a consistent induction process, that aims to set expectations, as well as forward-facing communications, third sector partnerships and signposting to allow guests to make well informed choices in relation to their accommodation.

## Aims

There is a growing number of households refusing accommodation offers for a range of reasons. These are often complex, but generally include preferences for living in a specific location, limited knowledge of the accommodation and location offered, or the accommodation offer not meeting the household's perceived needs.

This frustrates efforts to match families to settled accommodation, putting pressure on the initial accommodation and local authorities expecting a family/ individual to resettle and delays the start of the integration journey. The Offers of Accommodation Refusals Policy aims to:

- help to reduce the increasing number of refusals of appropriate accommodation offers. The process will not penalise families and individuals that refuse to move to accommodation that does not meet their needs (rather than their preferences)
- provide local authorities with the policy support needed to decrease the rate of refusals of offers of move on accommodation
- introduce a comprehensive communications package to improve guest understanding about the necessity for move on accommodation
- increase move on from welcome centres, hosts and hotels creating space for new arrivals and decreasing reliance on initial accommodation

## Assessing housing need

Prior to matching families or individuals to accommodation, the local authority will talk to them to make sure they have all the necessary information about the household's circumstances to enable them to make an appropriate offer of accommodation, which meets their needs. The matching process should take the following criteria into consideration.

Education:

- for households including children, accommodation will be sought within a reasonable distance of age-appropriate education facilities
- where the local authority is aware of the special educational needs of a child, this will be taken into consideration when allocating accommodation
- enrolling children in school does not mean that you will be able to stay in the area

## Health:

- the local authority will consider any known medical treatment needs, and accommodation provided will be within a reasonable distance of any necessary services
- for specialist or ongoing medical treatment where continuity of care is important and has already begun, the local authority will accommodate the household as close to that provision as possible. However, for more complex, specialist treatment, this may require significant travel out of the area

## Faith:

- the local authority will consider any faith practice needs and all households will be able to practice their faith if they wish to do so. In towns and cities, access to faith facilities may be in the form of a mosque, church or temple, however in more rural areas it may be via facilities such as Islamic centres, visiting imams, church groups or community gatherings

## Employment:

- when matching accommodation, the local authority will take into consideration the location of any paid employment that has already begun, or where there is a signed contract of paid employment in place. Where one of the adults is in employment which requires them to attend a specific location to perform that role, and where the role cannot move to another location the local authority will consider the impact of the proposed move and journey time on that employment and where possible seek to provide accommodation which is within a reasonable travel distance of it. This does not mean that being employed will guarantee you can stay in a particular area, or that employment would be classed a “good” reason for refusal
- households will be expected to meet the costs of any necessary travel to and from employment from their own funds

- speculative or unconfirmed offers of employment will not be taken into consideration for the purposes of matching accommodation

Family links:

- the local authority will take close family connections into consideration when matching accommodation as far as reasonably possible and will seek to provide accommodation within the same local area, or close by, where there are existing caring and support arrangements in place for family members

## Issuing offers of accommodation

First accommodation offer:

- the local authority will engage with the family/individual to assess their housing need and make a suitable offer of accommodation. Every effort should be made to ensure that the property fits the family/ individuals own criteria were possible. Local authorities will need to support residents and manage their expectations to ensure as many offers as possible are accepted
- the family/individual will be sent a formal offer letter from the local authority by email with details of the accommodation being offered and some information about the area in which it is located. The written offer may be provided in English but a Ukrainian or Russian version should be provided if the guest requests it in a preferred language. The local authority will discuss the offer and provide the family/ individual with more information about the accommodation and the area, as required, also ensuring they understand the consequences of refusing offers of accommodation
- the receiving local authority may also call the family/individual to provide more information about the property/area/support and encourage them to accept the offer
- the family/individual will be asked to reply to the formal offer within 5 working

days, advising of acceptance or rejection of the offer via email response.

Where this isn't possible, they can discuss with local authority support staff and sign an acceptance or refusal. The formal response should be recorded

- if the family/individual accepts the offer the local authority will agree a move in date within 5 working days. Individuals/families should also be given a minimum of 5 working days' notice prior to the move date
- if the family/individual refuses the offer the local authority will consider whether the reasons for refusal are reasonable and meet the criteria (detailed later in policy)
- if the local authority accepts the reasons for refusal in the review, the next accommodation offer will count as the 'first accommodation offer' and the original offer will not count towards the total number of offers
- if the local authority does not accept the grounds for refusal, or the first accommodation offer is ignored (ie no reply is received to the offer), this will result in a move to the second accommodation offer stage

#### Second (final) accommodation offer:

- the second offer will be made by the local authority in writing and will be final (unless the family/individual has good reasons for refusal). As with the first offer, the second written offer may be provided in English but a Ukrainian or Russian version should be provided if the guest requests it in a preferred language. The local authority will discuss the offer and provide the family/individual with more information about the accommodation and the area, as required, and will outline the consequences of refusing a further offer of accommodation
- as with the first offer, the family/ individual will be asked to reply to the formal offer within 5 working days, advising of acceptance or refusal of the offer. This response should be recorded
- if the family/individual refuse the offer, the local authority will consider whether the reasons for refusal are reasonable and meet the criteria. If the local authority accepts the reasons for refusal, another accommodation offer will be made, which will count as the second accommodation offer

- if after 2 refusals the first property offer is still available and families/ individuals wish to withdraw their refusal and accept, this may be possible, but will depend on a number of factors, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. All families/individuals should be encouraged to accept the first offer of appropriate accommodation made to them, as the second offer may not be preferable to them

## **Changes to the charging framework as of 7th August 2023**

Following a review of the policy with a cross section of local authorities and welcome centres, the Offers of Accommodation Refusals Policy has been updated.

The baseline charges will be increased to account for local authority administrative and resourcing costing. The charging framework will also be altered to a sliding scale, in which the weekly Move On Administration Charges will be increased in line with the number of refusals.

Guests will be placed onto the charging framework after 2 refusals of accommodation. The amount charged per week will increase by £20 each time a further offer of accommodation is refused. A cap on the maximum amount chargeable, equivalent to the move on administration charge of refusal of three suitable offers for single people, or 4 suitable offers, will also be implemented to ensure that guests are not disproportionately impacted. Larger properties are significantly more difficult to source and therefore higher charges have been applied, in line with charging reflecting resourcing costs. The charges listed below are inclusive of VAT:

Household number	Move On Administration Service Charge After 2 Refusals	Move On Administration Service Charge After 3 Refusals	Move On Administration Service Charge After 4 Refusals	Maximum weekly Move On Administration Charge	Maximum Move On Administration Charge over a monthly period
Individual under 25	£25 per week	£45 per week	£45 per week	£45	£195
Individual over 25 or couple under 25	£35 per week	£55 per week	£55 per week	£55	£238
2-person Household / or couple over 25	£45 per week	£65 per week	£85 per week	£85	£368
3-Person Household	£55 per week	£75 per week	£95 per week	£95	£412
Household of four or more persons	£65 per week	£85 per week	£105 per week	£105	£455

Application of policy:

- The baseline policy should only be applied from the introduction date of **7 August 2023** and will not be applied retrospectively. Anyone liable to receive the Move On Administration Charge will be liable to pay the relevant

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increased baseline amount from 7 August.

- The escalation charges will also apply from 7 August but everyone already eligible to have the Move On Administration Charge applied will be considered to have refused two reasonable offers only regardless of whether additional offers have been refused. This means that no-one will be liable to pay the Escalation Charge on 7 August. Escalation Charges will only be imposed where a subsequent refusal of reasonable accommodation takes place by someone already in receipt of the Move On Administration Charge.
- Anyone who had refused just one offer on 7 August will still be considered to have refused one offer and be liable to pay the increased Move On Administration Charge if they refuse a second reasonable offer of alternative accommodation.
- Families/individuals already in settled accommodation will not be able to use this process to move back into initial accommodation to source alternative properties.
- Please be aware it remains the expectation that guests will accept the first accommodation offer made to them, unless they have a 'good reason' to refuse.

#### Review process:

- If a family or individual rejects an accommodation offer, the local authority will review the offer, consider their reasons, and if it was a "good reason" to refuse, the offer will be discounted and will not be considered as 1 of the 2 reasonable offers. This will be determined through the review process concluding that the initial offer was not in fact a suitable and appropriate offer. If the review finds the offer of accommodation was reasonable and suitable the offer is upheld.
- The review process will be conducted by local authorities and will follow the same procedure as is applied to homelessness and social housing reviews and appeals. Guests will be entitled to request a review for both their first and second offer.
- If the review finds that the offer was appropriate, the household will be



informed of this and will be given their final second appropriate accommodation offer as soon as one becomes available, there are no minimum timescales for when this can be provided, but local authorities should ensure that families/individuals are given appropriate support to consider consequences of a further refusal. Pending the outcome of the review, if the second offer is found to be a reasonable offer of accommodation guests will be advised that they must either accept it or they will be placed onto the charging framework for accommodation.

### Charging Framework:

- If the suitability of the 2 reasonable offers is upheld a move on administration service charge will be introduced.
- Ukrainian individuals or families will be informed of the introduction of the charge in writing, with at least 7 days' notice. This notification will set out the schedule of payments, make clear that the charge does not provide a secured tenancy or right to occupy, and reiterate that securing move on accommodation remains a priority.
- Suitable support should be given to ensure that families/individuals have the correct financial arrangements in place to make the payments.
- Charges should be collected by the local authority that has the initial accommodation the individual/ family is placed within. It will be for local authorities to determine how they do this based on local circumstances.
- Local authorities are permitted to absorb these charges reflecting the resource demands posed by move on and will not be required to send charging funds to Welsh Government. It will be for local authorities to ensure these funds are appropriately accounted for.
- If Ukrainian families/individuals refuse to pay the charges implemented, this will be considered a violation of the behavioural Code of Conduct and can result in the family or individual being required to leave initial accommodation (see annex c for Guidance on Managing Breaches to the Code of Conduct). However, local authorities should take into account the potential impact on homelessness services, and eviction should be considered a last resort.

## How is an ‘appropriate offer’ defined?

An appropriate accommodation offer will:

- meet all relevant health and safety requirements, be in a good state of repair
- meet personal medical circumstances and ensuring continuity in medical provision where necessary
- give consideration of religious needs and beliefs
- give consideration of specific educational needs
- where necessary, adaptations to the property will be made before the household move in to ensure that it is accessible for any residents with a known disability
- accommodation will be available for a minimum of 6 months
- the accommodation will be affordable for the household, considering the financial resource available to them, including any government support for which they are eligible
- the accommodation will be of suitable size to accommodate all household members. The accommodation will meet as a minimum the standards outlined in the **Welsh housing quality standard**, with any newer accommodation adopting the **Welsh Development Quality Requirements 2021**, and **Department for Work and Pensions ‘housing benefit rules’**. Where accommodation has been delivered under the Transitional Accommodation Capital Funding programme then it will be expected to meet the associated standards
- for larger households, where it is not possible to identify one affordable accommodation option large enough to accommodate all household members together, the local authority will consult with the household to consider whether, with their consent, the family can be accommodated across 2 separate properties. The division of the family will take into account the ages of household members, any caring or vulnerability needs and the personal preferences of the family. Properties offered will be in reasonable

proximity to each other so that all household members can maintain close contact with each other

- the definition of an ‘appropriate offer’ and what is a ‘good reason’ for refusal should be shared in communication with Ukrainian guests

## **What could be considered as a ‘good reason’ for refusal?**

In exceptional circumstances, there may be good reasons for refusal of an ‘appropriate accommodation offer’.

‘Good reasons’ will be assessed on a case-by-case basis but could include:

- where the accommodation is later deemed not to be an ‘appropriate accommodation offer’ as set out above, for example due to needs around education, health, faith, employment, close family or caring responsibilities
- where the family/ individual has specific needs to be in a different area to access specialist medical or education support that is not available in or within a reasonable travelling distance to the offer area
- where a member of the family has care or support needs that are being met by close family members accommodated in a different area
- where a member of the family has the offer of paid employment as defined in the definition of an acceptable offer
- where there is a short-term barrier to the family moving, for example, a medical procedure, and the accommodation offer cannot wait for that to be completed
- being in employment isn’t considered a good reason to refuse an offer of accommodation. When deciding whether an offer is appropriate for the family/individual, the LA will take into account the nature of their employment, for example whether the local authority think that the travel distance between the accommodation being offered and their employment is reasonable, or whether the family/individual would be able to get a similar job in another area such as hospitality or factory work. It is more likely that a

local authority will consider the employment where it is a specialist role or adaptations have been made

## **Annex c: guidance for managing breaches of the Code of Conduct**

This guidance and template Behaviour Agreement build on the existing **Code of Conduct** for residents in initial accommodation.

The first port-of-call should be preventative measures. Assessing what the trigger for the behaviour may be through discussion with the individual and exploring how and if this can be resolved may prevent further challenging behaviour. This is not always possible operationally, but there are a few suggestions for mitigating unacceptable behaviour below. Local authorities should keep a log of all actions taken to resolve the issue with the guest.

### **De-escalation**

Giving individuals an opportunity to off-load to a third party, via the CALL helpline or other local service. You can use the **infoengine** site to find third sector offers in your area.

### **Trauma Informed approach**

Forced displacement caused by war is a traumatic experience. A trauma-informed, approach should be adopted by all staff in communicating with all residents including those displaying difficult and unacceptable behaviours. You can find resources on **Trauma-Informed Wales**. Introductory training is available on **Youtube**.

## Acceptable Behaviour Agreement

In cases where preventative measures have not been successful in resolving poor behaviour, a formal “Acceptable Behaviour Agreement” should be discussed and agreed with the guest and the guest should sign it. The template below sets out a formal agreement between the resident and the local authority including specific behaviour requirements and the consequences of not meeting these. The template can be tailored to include an additional specific behaviour if it is not already included in the template where this is an issue with an individual, if agreed by the Welsh Government. The offer of initial accommodation can be withdrawn at any time if the Code of Conduct or Acceptable Behaviour Agreement are breached or the guest refuses to agree the Code of Conduct or Acceptable Behaviour Agreement when asked. If guests refuse to sign the Acceptable Behaviour Agreement, it is still considered that the guest would have been made aware of the expectations surrounding their behaviour. Local authorities should remind them that the offer of initial accommodation can be withdrawn at any time if a guest refuses to agree the Code of Conduct or Acceptable Behaviour Agreement when asked.

Depending on the type and/or severity of the Code or Agreement breach it may be necessary to inform the police. It will be necessary if it is suspected a crime has been committed.

If the breach of the Code is resulting in another resident or staff member feeling unsafe, and there are reasonable grounds to suggest that safety may be at risk, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from the accommodation as soon as possible.

Prior to the withdrawal of initial accommodation, a discussion should be held with Welsh Government colleagues around the individual circumstances and the actions taken by the local authority to address the behaviour. The Welsh Government will normally agree with the decision of the local authority as long

as sufficient documentary evidence is provided to demonstrate the reasonableness of this decision. Following this discussion, the local authority should inform the individual of the decision of the authority and the alternative provision they will offer/provide.

[Download the template.](#)

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