**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – HOMES FOR UKRAINE**

**Support from the Asylum Seeker & Refugee Service**

***What support can we expect from the*** ***AS&R team?***

On our first visit to you and your guests your assigned Resettlement Officer (RO) will leave their contact details (email and phone number), as well as the team email address (asylumseekerrefugeeteam@northumberland.gov.uk).

Your RO will outline the support that we can offer. Each case is different, and our support is based on the individual needs identified in discussions with you as the host and your guests.

Things that are covered include:

* Help with benefits applications – what benefits are guests entitled to, help with applications, and follow ups
* Advice on accessing your local Jobcentre Plus, and an explanation of the services they offer
* Help with registering with the GP’s and Dentists, and advice on seeking specialist healthcare
* Help with school admissions for children and young people, as well as advice on free school meals
* Access to English lessons for adults (including 16-18year olds)
* Support available from key services like the Council and who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns

This list is not exhaustive, and your RO will try to help with any queries that you may have.

Regular contact

After the initial visit we will contact you and your guest monthly (normally by email but this can be discussed with your RO). This is an opportunity for you to discuss any minor issues you may be having. Of course, you don’t have to wait until your monthly contact to raise issues or concerns – you can speak to your RO at any time. If there is no possibility that the hosting arrangement can continue after the first six months, please make this known to your RO at the earliest opportunity and they can plan an online meeting to look at the options rather than waiting until the fifth month as outlined below.

At the beginning of month five we will contact you to discuss your plans for the end of the initial six-month hosting arrangement. Many hosts are able to continue to offer accommodation and support to their guests, but in some cases either the host or the guest wants to consider the alternatives. Your RO will give some basic advice which may help you to decide.

At the beginning of the six month the RO will arrange an in person visit to you and your guests to go through the options that are available in more detail. Depending on what you both decide the RO will also help with any applications that need to be made. Further details are available in the leaflet about housing options in Northumberland.

***Does the designated case worker stay supporting the refugee whilst they reside in the UK and if the refugee moves to a different county would they be assigned a new designated support worker?***

The RO may change over the course of a guests stay in Northumberland, depending on operational requirements. If a guest moves out of the county our support ceases and the new authority may appoint an RO, but this cannot be guaranteed.

***If guests need support with anything outside of office hours, what do they do?***

It would depend on what the issue is. If it is an emergency, then guests can ring the emergency services, or if it related to the Council and the services we provide, and it is an emergency they can ring 0345 600 6400 for the out of hours service. For anything that is not an emergency guests would need to wait until the office is open (Monday – Friday 8.30am - 5.00pm)

**Housing**

***What are the options for living independently?***

Social Housing

Social homes have rent pegged to local incomes and provide an affordable and secure housing option for people across the county. All social housing is advertised through Northumberland Homefinder, [click here](file:///C%3A/Users/kathryn.denton/Downloads/Northumberland%20Homefinder.pdf) to find more information on this.

There is no way to predict how long it will take to find social housing, as there is a high demand for a limited number of properties, and allocations are made on a basis of need. You can get a good idea of how many properties are normally available by looking at Northumberland Homefinder each week – you do not need to be registered to look.

The majority of social housing is situated in the southeast of Northumberland; applicants are encouraged to widen their area search to improve their chances of being housed.

Social housing is unfurnished and in most cases the property will have no flooring and will be undecorated. Paint packs can be provided if they are required.

Private Rented Accommodation

Private rented accommodation is provided by an individual landlord rather than a council or housing association. Tenants will be expected to pay market prices. Landlords will have to complete tenant checks which can include credit checks, references, guarantors, and bonds. Understandably it may be difficult for guests to pass these checks, but Northumberland County Council do offer a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (RDGS) to support individuals to find affordable and suitable private accommodation. To find out more information about the RDGS [click here.](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Housing/Private%20sector%20team/RDG-Tenant-leaflet-Oct-22.pdf)

The private sector is a better route for people who want to live in a particular area, it can also be a quicker option to find accommodation. Private housing is more likely to be decorated and already have flooring, in some cases properties may come part or fully furnished.

You can search for private rented accommodation on websites like Rightmove or Zoopla.

***Can the Council act as a guarantor for privately rented housing?***

No, we offer the rent deposit guarantee scheme, which is available to help people find suitable, affordable accommodation by providing a bond guarantee in the private rented sector.

It is also available to tenants who are unable to raise the funds from another source, providing the property identified is already accredited through the council’s private rented sector accreditation scheme.

Applicants will be required to save the sum of the guaranteed bond with Northumberland Community Bank.

The landlord will be given a paper guarantee that can be claimed upon the end of the initial tenancy period if there has been damage or rent arrears.

For more information, please email private sector housing or to apply, please see documents below.

* [Application form](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Housing/Private%20sector%20team/Application-Form-RDG.pdf)
* [Online application form](https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/tennant_acc_scheme)
* [RDGS Landlord guide](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Housing/Private%20sector%20team/RDG-Landlord-Guide-Oct-22.pdf)
* [RDGS Tenants guide](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Housing/Private%20sector%20team/RDG-Tenant-leaflet-Oct-22.pdf)

***What support can I get when living independently, for example help with furniture or utility bills?***

If you need advice on bills please see [Northumberland County Council - Household costs and bills](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Support/Types-of-support/household-bills.aspx#ToP) for further advice. You can also look at local second-hand shops for furniture, your RO can signpost you if you don’t know where they are.

For support with your utility bills the Government are giving every household £400 off their electricity bill. This is called the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

You’ll get the £400 in 6 instalments starting from October 2022. You’ll get:

* £66 in October and November
* £67 in December, January, February, and March

You don’t need to pay this back.

Your supplier will tell you in advance how you’ll get your discount, so it’s important that they have the correct contact details for you. If you haven’t already received your discount, please check to see if you have had an email from your supplier (remember to check your spam or junk folder too). They may have also sent a letter to you.

You will find the contact number for your energy supplier on the top up card or on any letters you have from them.

Further advice is available from the Government on all of the support on offer here - [Cost of living support - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

***What is Northumberland Homefinder?***

Homefinder is the councils housing allocations scheme, further information including FAQ’s can be found here: [Home - Homesearch (northumberlandhomefinder.org.uk)](https://www.northumberlandhomefinder.org.uk/)

***What happens if I have nowhere to stay?***

We are unable to give detailed answers on homelessness as every case is determined on its own merits. A case is looked at individually and the decisions made are determined by the circumstances of the individual and the situation they are in. More information is available here [Northumberland County Council - Homelessness and housing options](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Housing/Homelessness-and-housing-options.aspx)

***What happens to people in temporary accommodation who refuse an offer of housing?***

If the offer was deemed a suitable offer and the refusal reason was not considered reasonable then the household would be asked to leave the temporary accommodation and they would have to find alternative housing themselves.

**Employment and Skills**

***What support is available to help me find a job?***

Support is available through your local Job Centre, where your Advisor can help you look for a job vacancy most suited to your skills, write a CV and covering letter, fill out an application form and prepare for an interview.

***Are there any skills development courses and/or training available for adults in Northumberland?***

Yes – you can check [Home | Northumberland Skills | England](https://www.northumberlandskills.co.uk/) which covers a wide range of full and part-time courses, as well as apprenticeships and tailored training.

**Host Payments**

***Will Northumberland increase the host ‘thank you’ payments like some other local authorities?***

Following a review, the Government have increased the thank you payment to £500 from month 13 of hosting. The Council will keep this matter under review, and if appropriate may bring forward proposals to enhance financial support for hosts and guests.

**Miscellaneous**

***Is it possible to drive a car with Ukrainian License plates?***

Government policy states that vehicles can be driven for first 6 months, then you can either:

* [apply for your vehicle to stay longer without paying import duties](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/import-and-export-temporary-admission-notice-of-arrival-of-a-non-eu-private-motor-vehicle-c110) if you have a permit issued by the Home Office allowing you to stay longer than 6 months
* [apply for transfer of residence relief](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transfer-of-residence-to-great-britain), which means you would pay no import duties on personal items and household goods you bring into the UK if you become resident

You must still [register and tax your vehicle](https://www.gov.uk/vehicle-registration/new-and-used-vehicles) with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) if you become resident or stay longer than 6 months.