

Advice on Hosting Ukrainian Refugees

We have received a number of enquiries about how clergy might offer lodging for refugees in their own home. This guidance, on behalf of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), is being sent to all clergy occupying board or parsonage housing for information.

We may need to issue further guidance if the government change the rules or if further advice comes from the National Safeguarding Team.

Background to the Guidance

We want to give clergy the freedom to make the right decision for themselves and their families within an appropriate legal framework.

The '[Clergy Housing Guide](#)' requires you to apply to the Property Department for prior written consent and to enter into a 'Lodging Agreement', this guidance gives you the detail on how that will work. The Lodging Agreement is set up to protect the interests of the refugee lodgers, the clergy host family, and the DBF.

The guidance is in three parts:

- Things that you should think through first
- Next steps
- And some "golden rules"

Start Here: Important Things to Think Through

- **What do you have to offer?** Spare rooms are obvious, but think about how much emotional resilience you have, and how much time you have available. What is the wider network that will support you and your guests – is there a community that you are welcoming people into?
- **What about you?** Refugees are vulnerable, they are likely to be experiencing some level of trauma. The behaviour of traumatised people can be unpredictable, challenging, and not as you expect. Who will support you? The chances of finding yourself out of your depth are very real, please do not try to be a solo hero; only offer your home if you have a strong support network around you and you know that you are motivated by "their" need, not just our western guilt or our need for company and purpose.
- **Who will you welcome?** We strongly recommend that clergy do not offer homes to unaccompanied children, or adults who do not have mental capacity (as per the Mental Capacity Act).
- **Safeguarding.** If you have children or vulnerable adults already in your household or visiting you will need to take this into account in your decision-making.
- **How long?** Be clear with your family, us, and most importantly the potential guest, that you will provide accommodation for as long as you are able but there is a minimum expectation of six months. However, the Lodging Agreement is not open-ended and is not intended to create a permanent arrangement.

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Next steps

1. If you are considering offering accommodation to a refugee then you should contact Owain Wynne (contact details below) as soon as possible. Your request will be shared with the relevant Archdeacon. Owain will have some immediate questions, such as which room(s) you are proposing to use, for how long, and for how many people. You can do this straight away even if you have not finally made up your mind.
2. Owain will check to see if there are restrictions on the use of the property, if the room(s) are suitable and if there are any planning or building regulation issues. This should be a quick desktop exercise.
3. Once we know that the property is suitable and we have the answers to the initial questions we should be able to give you two things: the outline permission of the DBF and a draft Lodging Agreement with a translation into Ukrainian.
4. Once the Agreement is signed you will need to let us have a copy to trigger the final permission of the Board.

Some Golden Rules

- The Lodging Agreement will be under a legal form called a “Licence” – this is different to a tenancy - and will usually be between you (or the incumbent if that is not you) and the refugee(s). The DBF has an interest in this but will not usually be a party to the Agreement. You should understand that “accidentally” creating a tenancy, for instance by charging rent or calling them “my tenant” needs to be avoided!
- The Agreement gives the refugee(s) “a home” in legal terms, it protects them from being asked to leave on a whim and gives them a legal basis for being there. This is likely to be important to them if they need to use the address for legal purposes.
- The Agreement sets out obligations on both sides, for instance relating to privacy, or provision of utilities, and keeping the space clean and tidy etc.
- You may need to notify your home insurance provider, it is up to you to check that, and if you or members of your household claim benefits you may need to check that these are not affected.
- You will always need to check with our Property Management Team first, they will check to see there are no restrictions on the property that prevent its use for this, that you will not be breaking any planning or building regulations, and that the proposed lodging is fit for purpose.
- Finally we will need a copy of the completed Agreement when it has been entered into.

Contact details

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