



# Elmbridge Borough Council

*... bridging the communities ...*

## **Resettlement of Syrian Refugee Families Information for Prospective Landlords**

### **The Scheme**

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme is a national scheme run by the Home Office, which aims to resettle the most vulnerable families that have fled Syria and are currently living in refugee camps in the Middle East. Elmbridge Borough Council has pledged to resettle between five and fifteen families by 2020. To date we have resettled five families in Elmbridge. Under the scheme, the Council has a responsibility to provide specialist caseworker support, arrange access to English classes, and find suitable accommodation before they arrive. Support lasts for five years from date of arrival. The scheme will stop accepting new arrivals by 31 March 2020.

### **What kind of property is the Council looking for?**

The Council is looking for properties that meet the following criteria:

- a self-contained dwelling
- in a reasonable condition
- available for at least 12 months
- available before 31 March 2020
- ideally near transport links or within walking distance of shops or main services such as schools
- would not otherwise have been let to a family in need in Elmbridge

### **What help is available to landlords?**

The Council will aim to support landlords throughout the tenancy, as well as provide support for the families to ensure a successful tenancy. The funding provided by the Home Office for the scheme allows the council to offer assistance to landlords, which may include:

- Rent guarantee
- Help to prepare the property
- Covering void property costs
- Help with covering rent shortfall where rent levels are above the LHA rate
- Deposit

### **Who should I contact if I want to let my property to a Syrian family?**

Please contact our Housing Team at [housingpolicy@elmbridge.gov.uk](mailto:housingpolicy@elmbridge.gov.uk) or call **01372 474 216**.

### **What happens once I have made an offer?**

We will arrange for a Property Standards Officer to visit you at the property so that they can have a quick look to decide how many people the property could suitably accommodate and identify any safety concerns. An officer from the Housing Team will also be present to answer any questions you may have.

### **What happens after you have visited my property?**

If we think your property is suitable for a refugee family and if you are happy to continue, we will give a few details of your property to our Regional Migration Partner who will quickly get to work finding the most suitable family from their database of families waiting to be resettled in the UK. There is about a 6-8 week period between providing the details of your property and the family moving into the property. This is so pre-departure activities, such as preparing the families' documents and travel arrangements, can be carried out. There is funding available that can be used to cover void property costs for this period.

### **What happens before a family moves in to my property?**

Before a family arrives, a tenancy agreement will need to be drawn up and the rent level agreed. We will also need to ensure that the property is fully furnished with basic 'white goods' (food storage, cooker, washing machine, etc.) and other furnishings such as wardrobes and beds. Any additional help from the landlord in sourcing furnishings and white goods would be appreciated but is not essential. Immediately before the family arrives, gas and electricity need to be uncapped, water ready to use and kitchen appliances checked and working.

### **How will the family pay for their rent?**

The Council is able to offer a rent guarantee to landlords where the council will pay an agreed rent level directly to the landlord, ensuring that it is paid on time each month. Families will be eligible for Housing Benefit which will be reimbursed to the Council. Therefore, rent levels need to be close to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. To find out what the LHA rate would be for your property, please visit <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx>

### **Further information**

The Council will be providing a lot of support to the families through our caseworker who will assist them in their day-to-day living and in adjusting to the local area. Landlords are not required to provide additional support to the families, but if you would like to offer this it would be greatly appreciated. If you would like to know more about the scheme or how you can help refugees in other ways please visit our website:

<http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/makeadifference> or call our Housing Team on **01372 474216**.