

Lewisham Landlords' Guide: Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme

By the end of 2015, over 200,000 civilians had been killed in the ongoing Syrian conflict. Over 10 million people have left their homes to seek safety with 4 million of those leaving Syria entirely.

The government has committed to supporting 20,000 vulnerable Syrians by 2020. The Mayor of Lewisham, Sir Steve Bullock, would like the community to play its part in this national scheme. To this end, the Council is reaching out to landlords who can help us provide safety and protection for these very vulnerable people as they arrive in this country by supplying suitable accommodation.



Why is Lewisham participating?

On 7 September, Mayor Steve Bullock made the following statement: "The refugee crisis resulting from the continuing war in Syria has touched many of us. It is clear that the instinct of the British people to offer humanitarian help to those in need is as strong as ever. Lewisham residents are playing their part already and expect their Council to play its part too." Other London boroughs which are participating include Camden, Barnet, Kingston, Islington and Lambeth. The final decision on Syrian resettlement will be made at a meeting of Lewisham's Full Council on 21st September 2016. All are welcome to attend.

Who will cover the cost?

The national Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) Programme is funded via the Home Office. Syrians resettled under the scheme will be granted a 5 Year 'Humanitarian Visa' which will entitle them to housing benefits and the right to work. Lewisham are asking landlords to provide a 24 month tenancy at Local Housing Allowance rates or lower. (Latest LHA rates are available [here](#).)

What kind of properties will the families stay in?

Lewisham landlords are being urged to consider letting properties that have not been otherwise available. Lewisham is looking to resettle families rather than individuals, and consequently are primarily looking for 2 and 3 bedroom properties.

The people coming to the UK under the Syrian VPR scheme are in desperate need of assistance and many have significant needs. The scheme prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others. This means that any properties offered must meet local authority standards and may have to have adaptations made to them for mobility and/or other needs. These adaptations will be fully funded.

When will the families arrive and who will support them?

It is expected that the first families will arrive in January or February 2017. New arrivals will require assistance in resolving housing issues related to utilities, repairs, waste services, etc. For this reason specialist case workers will work with the families closely, especially in the very first few weeks and months.

What help is needed?

There is a lot of support for the project in Lewisham and many local people have offered to help however they can. Lewisham Council is willing to work to resettle people via the national scheme but needs willing landlords.

There are 2 million landlords nationally serviced by letting agents. Some letting agents have responded to the crisis by contacting all landlords on their books. In Luton, where this happened first, dozens of properties were found in a few hours. Help with furnishings is also needed. Most importantly, family-size properties available at LHA rate are wanted.

If you think you might be able to help, please email nicola.marven@lewisham.gov.uk



Lewisham