**CITIZENS UK: FINDING PRIVATE LANDLORDS**

**What are the benefits of finding private landlords?**

The Government’s Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPR) scheme provides funding to cover costs of resettlement, and this includes the costs of private rented accommodation at Local Housing Authority Rates.

It is essential that the Syrian refugees can be resettled with no disadvantage to existing residents. By offering private rented accommodation to refugees, landlords can make a huge contribution to achieving this goal, as it will mean the scarce supply of social and affordable private sector housing is not impacted upon. Citizens UK, an independent community organising charity, is working with councils and local landlords to make this happen.

**Why do we need privately rented homes for Syrian refugees?**

We have committed as a country to taking 20,000 refugees but only just over 1000 have been resettled as of December 2015. That is in part because not all local authorities have said they will take people – but also because most local authorities have a shortage of housing. We don’t want to make this a fight between housing that is available for local people who need it and vulnerable refugees. The Council and Citizens UK are looking to work with new private landlords and agents who can help. Social housing is very scarce with long waiting lists of UK residents in need. The private housing sector is much larger and flexible which makes it more suitable to for these purposes.

**Can I rent just one room to a refugee?**

At present, for Syrian refugees, the Home Office only allows (on UN advice) accommodation that has its own front door. This is important to protect vulnerable people and ensures that refugees can have independence when they arrive. It also avoids a number of safeguarding issues. If you have a spare room and would like to use it to help refugees, you can sign up at <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/calling-landlords/> to be linked to NAACOM, which organises spare rooms for destitute asylum seekers.

**What types of homes are needed?**

We are ideally looking for family sized rental properties.

**How long do I need to be willing to rent a home for?**

12 months minimum. To offer increased stability for the refugees as they settle into their new community we are asking that wherever possible landlords consider renting their properties to refugees for at least 2 years.

**How much will I be paid to rent my home?**

You will be paid at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. There’s a postcode specific search engine though, so it’ll be very easy to confirm where individual properties are. If you want to check what rate you would receive for your property, visit <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx>

In addition, a cash incentive will be paid to any landlord who can rent a home to a Syrian refugee. The cash incentive rates in the London borough of Barnet are:

* For a 12 or 15 month tenancy with no break clauses = **£2000** cash incentive
* If a landlord or agent renews for a second year we will pay a renewal fee of **£500**
* For a 24 month tenancy with no break clauses = **£5000** cash incentive

This will vary from council to council – ask yours whether they are considering the initiative.

**How long will it take to organise for a Syrian refugee to be in my home, and what do I do if I currently have a tenant but would like to help in future?**

We are looking for homes immediately and from January, February or March 2016. If needed, there will be a payment to cover the rent for up to four weeks prior to the refugees signing their tenancy agreement and moving. This will be used to secure the use of the property ahead of the refugees arriving. However, resettlement will continue over the next 5 years, so if you would like to register your property, it may become very helpful in the resettlement programs up until 2020. See here to register - <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/calling-landlords/>

**If I am helping to lead a team in my local area to find private landlords, what process should I follow?**

**Step 1: Local Landlords**

Identify the exact requirements of a landlord and identify the potential barriers or fears that might prevent a landlord from saying yes.

Landlord’s interested to join Register need to:

* Own a family sized rental property
* Be prepared to offer it as home to a Syrian refugee family, if vacant when demand arises
* Be able to offer a 3 year tenancy to provide stability to that family upon their arrival in UK
* Be able to rent property out for Local Housing Allowance rate. First 12 months of rent will be paid by the EU, subsequent months either through housing benefit or family’s own earnings

A wide range of landlords may be interested, a prevailing profile has not yet emerged. They may only have one property to rent but be socially-minded, or they may have several and therefore feel that they are in a comfortable position to register.

**Step 2: Approach local letting agents**

\*Did you know? In Luton, letting agents contacted all landlords on their books and dozens of properties were found within hours\*

**Questions to ask local letting agents:**

1. Are you willing to reach out to the landlords on your books?

2. Do you require any support? Can we make things easier for you in any way?

3. If not on board yet… can I make an appointment to meet you at your office?

4. What are your contact details?

5. Would you be interested in attending a public meeting to tell others how you got landlords to register?

**Step 3: Approach Housing Associations**

Are you willing to pledge to house a Syrian refugee family when the need arises, i.e. when the family is resettled to the UK in line with the Government’s plans?

**Step 4: Approach Churches / Mosques / Synagogues , e.g. Schools**

Do you have any resources (properties / school places / community volunteers), which could be useful to a resettled refugee family? Are you happy to make a pledge in support of those who will be resettled in your area? i.e. can we list you and contact you when the need arises?”

**Possible Objections**

1. “Why our area? There is severe housing shortage here”.

Many local councils have demonstrated solidarity to welcome and offer a bright future to what is likely to be a relatively small number of refugee families. Moreover, we believe that this crisis can be better managed if refugees are accommodated around the country.

2. “What will landlords gain from signing up? Why should I tell them about this?”

Landlords will not be making a loss: during the first 12 months the EU will pay the equivalent of the Local Housing Allowance Rate, after which the resettled family will be entitled to housing benefit.

There may be landlords who already wish to support refugees but may not know how to do so: they will be grateful to you for informing them on how to house refugees.

1. “What will I as agent gain from reaching out to landlords about this campaign?”

You will demonstrate that you are somebody who understands the community well and knows that people want to welcome refugees.

The reputation of your agency will increase: landlords will appreciate your efforts and what you stand for. Moreover, reporters from local newspapers would be interested in running stories on the agents and landlords that have stepped up.

4. “I am not interested. We do not have many properties / landlords in this area”.

Where are you based instead? Similar campaigns are being run in many other local groups, possibly in nearby areas. Let me connect you with another coordinator.

**Template**

Dear Landlord,

With the war in Syria we are facing a humanitarian crisis that has not been seen on this scale for a generation. Citizens UK is working with [insert] council to enable our borough to develop a Refugees Welcome programme and resettle [insert number] refugee families to our borough.

Last year, children froze to death in UN-administered camps on the borders of Syria. As winter is here again, we have an opportunity to do our part and save lives. Our government has committed to resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK over 5 years. The first few have already arrived but many more are still to join us. To make this happen, we need homes (not spare rooms) that they can live in. These homes will be paid for through a mixture of EU and national government money.

We’re hoping to resettle 110 refugees in each constituency in the UK over the next 5 years as our role in the refugee crisis. In Luton, one estate agency contacted all the landlords on their books and enough homes were found to resettle 50 people in one day. That is all it takes – for 20 landlords to rent a home to a refugee family.

**What can you do to help?**

If you are a landlord and are willing to explore renting your house or flat to a Syrian refugee, please contact us on [insert number] or at [insert email]. You can find out more on the FAQs overleaf or see our Refugees Welcome website for details of the landlords scheme <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/calling-landlords/>

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely,