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**Lodging for refugees in clergy homes – Guidance**

This is broad guidance for those in Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance (LDBF) or Parsonage housing who are considering offering lodging for refugees in their own home, specifically in response to the UK Government’s Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The guidance below has been developed from the work of the Diocese of Truro and we are grateful for their willingness to share and work collaboratively.

Clergy should refer to the Property Team by emailing property@leeds.anglican.org if they are looking to offer accommodation and make them aware of their intention.

Guidance will be updated if the government change the rules, and this additional guidance should be read alongside the Church of England Toolkit, which can be accessed [here](https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/community-action/war-ukraine-responding)

**Background to the guidance**

Clergy need the freedom to make the right decision for themselves and their families within an appropriate legal framework.

Incumbents do not need the permission of the LDBF to enter into ‘Licence Agreements’ but we would encourage them to follow the guidance below for those in LDBF property in order to protect themselves and their families.

Due to the urgency of the situation, the LDBF have agreed to permit clergy to offer accommodation to Ukrainian refugees. This should be done via a Lodging Agreement. The “Lodging Agreement” is set up to protect the interests of the refugee lodgers, the clergy host family, and the Incumbent or Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance (LDBF).

The agreement will be between the parties who have signed the licence.

It is important to note that it would not be appropriate for clergy to participate in the scheme if they are unlikely still to be in their home in six months’ time, due to the practical and legal issues that would arise if refugees were to be left in a home by themselves without a host.

**Start here; important things to think through**

* What do you have to offer? A spare room/space is obvious, but you should also 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 a personal 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, about how long you expect the arrangement to last. The Lodging Agreement is not open-ended and is not intended to create a permanent arrangement.

**Next Steps**

1. If you are considering offering accommodation to a refugee then you please let the Property Team know by emailing property@leeds.anglican.org
2. The Property Team will check to see if there are restrictions on the use of the property and if there are any planning or building regulation issues. This should be a quick desktop exercise.
3. Subject to their being no issues in the use of the building then then the Property Team will confirm that you can provide accommodation. As soon as it is available we will also send a draft Lodging Agreement with a translation into Ukrainian.
4. Once the Agreement has been signed, please forward it to property@leeds.anglican.org. If there are any council tax implications, the Property Team will ensure that the relevant local authority is informed.

**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 LDBF 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 “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 the diocesan Property Team first, they will see that there are not any restrictions on the property that prevent its use for this, that you won’t be breaking any planning or building regulations, and that the proposed lodging is fit for purpose.
* ****Finally, the LDBF will need a copy of the completed Agreement.