

## Housing Options in Solihull Ukrainian

### Social Housing (Council and Housing Association)

If you are a Ukrainian living in the UK under one of the Ukraine schemes, you can apply for social housing (Council and Housing Association) if you meet the local connection criteria and have a housing need.

You can apply to join the Council's waiting list at [www.solihullhomeoptions.org.uk](http://www.solihullhomeoptions.org.uk). Solihull Community Housing (SCH) manage this on behalf of the Council. They will decide whether you can be accepted, and if accepted they will assign you a priority band based on your circumstances.

The Council offers a choice-based lettings system and therefore you will need to check the website on a weekly basis to bid (express your interest) on properties which you would like to be considered for. You can place two bids per week.

There is a shortage of social housing and there can be long waiting times. Solihull Council mainly owns flats (low-rise and high-rise buildings) and the average waiting time for available 3+ bedroom houses is over two years.

Most social housing is in North Solihull (Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst and Smiths Wood). Although there are some properties in South Solihull (areas like Elmdon, Damson Wood, Olton, Shirley, Knowle, Meriden) there are far fewer properties in these areas. As demand is much higher than supply, there is a low chance that you would receive an offer of social housing in south Solihull.

Waiting times can be shorter for people aged 55 and over who want to go into age restricted housing (bungalows and some flats) or retirement housing (also known as sheltered housing).

#### Housing Associations

Housing Associations are social landlords who provide affordable housing.

Solihull Council manages the allocation of social housing within Solihull so if you are accepted onto the Council's housing waiting list, you will be able to bid for both Council and Housing Association properties that are advertised.

If you are matched (you are selected based on your band and waiting time) to a Housing Association property, you will be nominated to that landlord, and they will decide if they can offer you the tenancy by completing their own checks.

### Private renting

The Government have translated a separate guide called 'How to Rent' which provides information about renting in the private sector. This includes the things you need to consider and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

#### Local Housing Allowance

It is important to think about how much rent you can afford to pay. You may be eligible for help towards your rent through Universal Credit (housing element) or Housing Benefit if you are currently unemployed, claiming benefits or earning a low income. Your entitlement will be based on your household's income, and therefore you may not receive the full amount.

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are the maximum amounts that the Government will pay towards your rent. The rate you may receive will vary depending on the part of Solihull you live (LHA rates are split into north and south). You can find out the LHA rate by adding the post code of the property/area you are interested in, to the following website [lha-direct.voa.gov.uk](http://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk). You can also use this website to find out how many bedrooms you are entitled to, based on members of your household (click on LHA Bedroom Calculator).

If you are a single person under the age of 35 you may only be entitled to the shared room rate.

#### House Share

If you are a single person or a couple, you may wish to live with other people to share the cost of rent and bills.

You may know other people who are also looking to rent and would be willing to share. If you take on a whole property you will need to be named on the tenancy agreement if you need to claim housing costs.

You could also rent a room in the same property as the landlord (you would be a 'lodger' and have a licence to occupy) or find a spare room in a house with other people who are renting individual rooms from a landlord. Please see [www.spareroom.co.uk](http://www.spareroom.co.uk)

If you are going to rent a room from someone, make sure the person letting the room is entitled to do so. They may have signed a contract with the landlord that does not allow them to 'sublet' their room to someone else.

Help with deposits/rent in advance

You should aim to save some of your income whilst you are living with a host and have less outgoings as this will help you to secure housing in an area of your choice. Most landlords require a month's rent as a deposit as well as the first month's rent up front.

Solihull Council may be able to assist you if you need to leave your current accommodation and you have not been able to save enough to cover the upfront costs.

The Council would only help you to secure a property if we are satisfied you can afford to pay the monthly rent and your other essential bills such as council tax, gas, electricity, water, and food. This is to ensure that you do not become threatened with homelessness again. The landlord or letting agent may also carry out affordability checks before they agree to offer you a tenancy.

The property does not have to be in Solihull to receive this assistance. It may be in a bordering area such as Birmingham or Coventry where rents can be cheaper.

Guarantor

Some landlords/letting agents will also request a guarantor. The guarantor would have legal requirements to pay for rent or property damage if you (the tenant) cannot. The guarantor is normally a family member or close friend.

Solihull Council cannot be a guarantor for you and given the level of responsibility it is unlikely that your host would be able to act as guarantor for you either. The landlord could apply for a county court judgment (CCJ) against you and the guarantor if neither of you pay what's been agreed.

If you can pay more rent upfront the landlord may not require a guarantor.

**Homelessness**

Homeless Application

You can make a homeless application if you are currently homeless, or you are threatened with becoming homeless within 56 days (you have been given notice to leave current accommodation). Solihull Community Housing (SCH) provides the homelessness service on behalf of Solihull Council.

SCH has a duty to assist you to prevent or relieve your homelessness. This does not mean that they have to find accommodation for you but will work with you to either keep you in your current accommodation or help you to secure alternative accommodation. They will advise you about all the available options including the private rented sector, supported or social housing.

If they are unable to prevent or relieve your homelessness and they decide that you are in priority need, you are not intentionally homeless and you have a local connection to Solihull they have a duty to provide you with one offer of suitable accommodation.

This could be an offer of a Council tenancy, or it could be a tenancy with a Housing Association or private landlord. If you say no to this property without a good reason, you will need to leave any temporary accommodation you have been provided with and find somewhere to live yourself.

Temporary Accommodation

If you are homeless, you are eligible for assistance and there is reason to believe you are in priority need, you will be provided with temporary accommodation by Solihull Community Housing.

If you are a family this may be a budget hotel initially, or self-contained accommodation if this is available. If you are a single person, the offer will be shared accommodation.

You will need to pay rent and any service charges for the temporary accommodation you are provided with (other than hotel accommodation).

You may be entitled to claim housing costs to cover some or all the rent, however it is likely that you will need to pay any included service charges for gas, electricity, or water from your own income. If you are unsure what you need to pay, please check with your Housing Options Officer to avoid getting into debt.