

SUBJECT: HOMESearch POLICY AND PROCEDURE – AMENDMENTS AND WELSH TRANSLATION REQUIREMENT

MEETING: ICMD

DATE: 31st August 2022

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities of the need to amend the existing Homesearch Policy and Procedure and of the associated costs of the welsh translation requirements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Cabinet Member:

- 2.1 Approves the minor amendments required to the Homesearch Policy and Procedure Version Two (Appendix One) considering legislative changes, affording Ukrainian refugees the right to apply for Social Housing.
- 2.2 Recognises the need to update the Homesearch web platform to provide welsh translation and the associated budget implications.

KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In April 2022, Welsh Government Ministers passed an amendment of *The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2022* to include Class L - *a person who has been granted leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom by virtue of Appendix Ukraine Scheme of the Immigration Rules(6).*” This amendment followed a statement of changes in the Immigration Rules: HC 1220 which was laid before Parliament on 29 March 2022 which introduced Appendix 6 – The Ukraine Scheme.
- 3.2 The Ukraine Scheme gives limited leave for Ukrainian refugees to remain in the UK for an initial period of three years. The visa schemes provide the right to work and recourse to public funds, and access to benefits and services. The amended regulation also makes these groups eligible for homelessness assistance and social housing. The 2022 Regulations also exempts those fleeing Ukraine who are British Nationals, other persons not subject to immigration control with a right of abode in the UK from the requirement to meet the habitual residence test when applying for these services.
- 3.3 The local, Monmouthshire connection is defined as:

- a) The applicant or a member of their household has lived in the County in accommodation of their choice for 2 out of the past 3 years or 3 out of the past 5 years. For a local connection to apply, an applicant must have lived in Monmouthshire through their own choice.
 - b) The applicant or a member of their household are employed within the County, and they work within the area (i.e., not just where the employers head office is). Someone who is self-employed would need to show that they routinely work in Monmouthshire to qualify. Employment will be deemed to be work that is permanent or long term in nature and is for 15 hours a week or more.
 - c) The applicant or a member of their household has a family association, (being mother or father (or a person who's acted in that capacity), brother, sister or dependent children or adult children) who reside within the County and have done so for the past 5 years continuously. This includes stepchildren and adopted children. There will be no local connection where the relationship is estranged.
 - d) The applicant has just been or is about to be discharged from the British Armed Forces and has previously lived in the County as defined in 10.2 (a) immediately prior to joining the armed forces.
 - e) There are special circumstances, for example, the applicant or their household needs to be near special medical or support services that are only available in the Monmouthshire area. A local connection established on these grounds is likely to be exceptional. We would consider someone has a local connection where they are living in domestic abuse refuge accommodation in Monmouthshire, and it is considered unsafe for them to return to the area that they have left.
 - f) The applicant is owed a Homeless Section 73 or Section 75 duty by MCC under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
 - g) An applicant has been provided with accommodation (at any time) in Monmouthshire, in relation to Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 or succeeding legislation and in line with Section 81 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
 - h) Under The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2022. The amended regulation makes these groups eligible for homelessness assistance and social housing.
- 3.4 There is therefore a need to make the minor amendments required in the appended 'Homesearch Policy and Procedures 2022 – Version Two' as highlighted in pages 15 and 16 of (Appendix One), in line with the changes detailed in the paragraphs above.

3.5 **Welsh Translation Requirements**

- 3.5.1 The Council are required to provide a Welsh language version of the housing waiting list, [Monmouthshire Homesearch](#), to comply with its Welsh Language Standards. LinguaSkin have provided a proposal for a bilingual (English/Welsh) interface to enable the Council to satisfy this requirement.

- 3.5.2 LinguaSkin is a software solution that enables a multilingual interface to be created and maintained for web applications without requiring any changes to a target site. It inserts a language selector and replaces all text displayed to a user with pre-translated replacements.
- 3.5.3 A comparative solution has been investigated with Locata who host the Homesearch website however costs were not found to be competitive.
- 3.5.4 Whilst LinguaSkin provide the interface, there will be costs associated with translating text, application forms, adverts, etc. these will be covered by the Council's Policy and Performance team who provide the Council's welsh language translation service. To ensure the efficacy of the system the Council's Welsh Language Officer will be called upon to proofread the site and information in order to check for any errors.
- 3.5.5 The overall costs to the Housing and Communities Team to provide the welsh language version of Homesearch, which will need to be managed as a pressure within the overall service budget moving forward, have been confirmed as follows:
- First year: £6,500
 - Annually thereafter: £3,000

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation Assessment detailed in Appendix Two anticipates that the policy amendment and welsh translation requirements detailed within this report will have a positive impact on peoples' social, emotional, health and wellbeing, education, and skills.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 An options appraisal is not required for this report as there are legal requirements to amend the Homesearch Policy and Procedures and to provide welsh translation of the service.

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 There is a legal requirement to make minor amendments to the Homesearch Policy and Procedure Version Two (Appendix One) considering legislative changes, affording Ukrainian refugees the right to apply for Social Housing. There is also a legal requirement for the Council to provide welsh translation of the Homesearch web platform.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 The cost to provide the welsh language version of Homesearch is £6,500 in the first year and £3,000 annually thereafter. These costs will need to be managed as a pressure within the overall service budget moving forward.

7.4 CONSULTEES:

- DMT – Communities and Place;
- Cabinet;
- Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix One – Homesearch Policy and Procedure - Version Two

Appendix Two - Equality and Future Generations Evaluation Assessment

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Appendix One



Homeseach Policy
and Procedure_Amen

Appendix Two



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