



Welcome to Dorset

Dorset Council extends our warmest welcome to you. We understand that Dorset is a long way from your home, family, and friends, and have put together this welcome pack to tell you more about living in Dorset and the support that is available to you.

As a Dorset resident you will come into contact with a range of services available through the council and our Dorset Together network of public, voluntary, and charitable organisations. These services include:

- Community support
- Education – adults
- Education - children
- Employment
- Family and children's services
- Financial support
- Healthcare – registering with a GP
- Healthcare – registering with a dentist
- Healthcare – contact details
- Housing
- Libraries
- Refuse collection
- Social care
- Sports and Leisure
- Travel and transport

More information about the council and what we do can be found on our website:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk You can also contact Dorset Direct, the council's customer services, on telephone: 01305 221000, email: customerservices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

About Dorset

Dorset is part of the south west region of England, and borders the four counties of Somerset, Devon, Wiltshire, and Hampshire. It has a mix of coastal locations and rural countryside with many large towns including Weymouth, Dorchester, Wimborne, Bridport, Blandford, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, and Wareham.

London is easily accessible via train with two main lines running through the county. There are two services running to London from Sherborne, Gillingham, Dorchester, and Weymouth with additional stops throughout the county.

Services

Community support

Help And Kindness, a voluntary organisation based in Dorchester, is gathering together a list of local groups and networks providing a range of help and support to those arriving. This includes translation services, activities and events, practical support with clothes, toys and other items, social and psychological services, food, and hospitality.

For more information visit: www.helpandkindness.co.uk/support-for-ukraine or contact telephone: 01305 595958

Citizens Advice Dorset can also provide advice and information on welfare benefits, employment, housing issues, relationship problems, and legal matters: <https://centraldorsetca.org.uk> or telephone: 0800 144 8848.

Education - adults

Skills and Learning have several adult learning centres across Dorset providing a range of courses including English for Speakers of Other Languages courses for learners whose first language is not English. Financial support to study is also available.

You can contact Skills and Learning directly by telephone: 01202 123444 or visit: <https://www.skillsandlearningace.com/>

Education - children

Early years education and childcare is available for babies and children aged 0 to 4 years. You can find out more about how to find childcare by visiting our website at [Choose the right childcare - Dorset Council](#).

Full-time education is available for all children aged 5 to 19 years:

- Infant – 5 to 7 or 8 years old
- Junior – up to 11 or 12 years old
- Secondary – 11 or 12 up to 16 years old (end of compulsory schooling)
- Further education from 16 to 19 years old

The school structure may differ depending on where you live in the county.

To find a school place please visit the Dorset Council website:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/education-and-training/schools-and-learning/schools-and-learning>

Alternatively, you can contact us by email: customerservices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or through Dorset Direct, the council's customer services, on telephone: 01305 221000.

Please contact Dorset Council on the details above to discuss grants and financial support including free school transport, school uniform grants and free school meals.

Employment

For support or advice to find work in Dorset visit:

- Dorset Council careers and jobs: <https://jobs.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
- Jobcentre Plus: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus> (which gives you details of your nearest Jobcentre Plus centre)

Family and children's services

Our Dorset Family Information Service is a free, impartial information service for parents and carers of children and young people aged up to 19 years, or up to 25 years for those with special educational needs or disability (SEND). Further information can be found at: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/get-help-for-your-family/family-information-service>.

We also have a number of children's centres and hubs across Dorset (Chesil, Dorchester, East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset) providing a range of free activities and support events for children and families:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/childcare/childrens-centres> You can also call the service on telephone: 01305 221066.

Financial support

Paying for things you need:

Once you arrive, we will provide you with a pre-loaded payment card which will help to cover day-to-day needs. We will contact you to arrange sending your card to you.

You can claim benefits immediately, alongside Universal Credit and other benefits where eligible.

Citizens Advice Dorset can help with initial benefit claims and ongoing benefit support. They can be contacted by telephone: 0800 144 8848 or visit the website:

<https://citizensadvisedorset.org.uk>

Healthcare – registering with your GP/doctor

A GP is the first doctor you will see when assessing healthcare. To receive medical treatment, you and your children must register with a GP as soon as possible, even if you are not ill. To find a GP and register visit the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/>

You will be asked to fill out a registration form and bring identification and proof of your address if you can. Please note immigration status is not necessary to register.

You may be eligible to apply for the NHS low-income scheme for help with health costs such as prescriptions, dental care, and eyesight tests. You can ask your GP practice about this.

Healthcare – registering with a dentist

You should register with a dentist as an NHS patient and let them know if you are receiving benefits, in which case your check-ups and necessary treatment will be free. If you need to get dental treatment before receiving Universal Credit you will be charged.

You can get additional money from Universal Credit if you have a health condition that means you are unable to work or prepare for work.

Healthcare – contact details

- For urgent medical help – use the NHS 111 online service or call 111 if you're unable to get help online.
- For life-threatening emergencies – call 999 for an ambulance.

A list of local hospitals and other healthcare services can be found on the Dorset Healthcare website:

<https://www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/our-services-hospitals/community-hospitals>

Public Health Dorset also provides a range of services to improve the physical and mental health of residents: <https://www.publichealthdorset.org.uk/your-health/your-health>

Housing

Dorset Council can provide help if you have an issue with your provided accommodation – for example overcrowding, poor state or repair or if you are at risk of violence. We will carry out an assessment to establish what kind of support you need and what we can offer.

For advice please call: Dorset Direct, the council's customer services, on **telephone: 01305 221000**, email: customerservices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Libraries

Our council-run libraries offer book lending and reference facilities, access to computers, e-books and much more. They are also a great place to meet others from the local community.

To find your nearest library visit:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/libraries-history-culture/libraries/libraries>

Refuse collections

Rubbish and recycling are collected by Dorset Council on a fortnightly basis and you will have access to a bin for standard, household rubbish and a separate bin for recyclable items (paper, cardboard and hard plastics).

To find out when your collections take place and other waste facilities visit:

<https://mapping.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/mylocal/>

Social care

Dorset Council is responsible for social care for adults, children, and families in the county. Services include safeguarding, homecare and disability or family support.

For advice please call: Dorset Direct, the council's customer services, on **telephone: 01305 221000**, email: customerservices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Further details for adults can be found at:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/care-and-support-for-adults>

Information on support for children can be found at:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/childrens-social-care/childrens-social-care>

Sports and Leisure

Dorset Council offers a range of leisure and sports facilities. To find your nearest leisure centre and local activity groups visit our website:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/sport-leisure/sport-and-leisure>

With beautiful countryside on your doorstep, we also have a number of walking routes, woodlands, heaths, beaches and country parks you can visit:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/country-parks-and-visitor-centres>

Travel and transport

Travel Dorset has lots of information about getting around the county. Visit website: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/travel/travel for bus timetables and journeys, applying for a bus pass, cycle and walking routes and other public transport.

For information about coach routes across the country visit: www.nationalrail.co.uk

Rail trains in Dorset serve a number of routes across the county and nationally. For local train services visit South Western Railway: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/>

The nearest airports are Exeter, Bournemouth, and Southampton.

Other information and support

Immigration

Depending on what visa or immigration status you have been given to enter the UK, you may need to access immigration advice from a qualified immigration adviser about extending this or making a different kind of application in future.

Legal aid can help meet the costs of legal advice and representation but is only available for certain types of applications and for people who cannot afford to pay for a solicitor privately.

You can contact Citizen Advice Dorset for further support by telephone: 0800 144 8848.

Benefits and finance

- **Universal Credit and Child Benefit**

The UK government provides basic welfare benefit payments for people who are unable to work, who are looking for work but have not yet found a job, or who are on a low income.

This is called Universal Credit. It's paid monthly and you need to apply for it online.

Universal Credit can be used to pay for your living expenses such as food, clothing, transport, household bills and anything you want to buy.

If you have questions about how Universal Credit works you can call the Universal Credit Full Service by **telephone on 0800 328 5644**.

Or call Citizens Advice Help to Claim by **telephone on 0800 144 8 444**

If you have children, you may be entitled to Child Benefit for those under 16 years, and sometimes for older children (aged 16-20) if they are in approved full-time education. More details can be found at: www.gov.uk/child-benefit/how-to-claim

Universal Credit is paid into one bank account, yours, or your partner's. To receive Universal Credit or other benefits yourself, you need to open a bank account. A bank will need to see documents that prove your identity, immigration status and address.

If you do not have a bank account, you can get your first payment as a voucher. This is called 'government payment exemption service'. You will need to tell the Job Centre why you have not been able to open a bank account. This can take a long time, so it is better to try and open a bank account first.

Essential items and food

There are a number of local charities that can provide you with basic essential items or food if there are delays with accessing financial support.

You can search for your local foodbank:

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/>.

You can also search for other charities offering financial support through local voluntary organisation Help And Kindness: <https://www.helpandkindness.co.uk/support-for-ukraine> or Turn2Us: <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

Ukrainian charities in the UK such as the Association of Ukrainians of Great Britain www.augb.co.uk may also be able to help.

Other health and mental health services

Your GP will be able to give guidance and treatment on emotional and mental health as well as physical health.

If you need additional support with anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, you can contact:

- Mind, a mental health charity – telephone: 0300 123 3393, website: www.mind.org.uk
- Samaritans, which provides emotional support – telephone: 116 113, email: jo@samaritans.org

If you are experience domestic violence and/or abuse in your relationship (physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, emotional and financial abuse), you can contact the National Centre for Domestic Violence on telephone: 0800 970 2070, website: www.ncdv.org.uk If you are in immediate danger, you should call 999.