

# #REFUGEESWELCOME

## COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES

**Thank you** for showing such an interest in this new way of helping refugees to settle in the UK. It is wonderful that you are eager to become a community sponsor (or to support others to do so) and that you look forward to a day when you can welcome a refugee family at the nearest airport in the way that this sponsoring group in Canada did recently.



The Canadians serve as a great inspiration because sponsorship of refugees has been happening there for 25 years. So far more than **250,000 refugees** have been resettled in Canada as a result.

In July 2016 the government announced the introduction of a Community Sponsorship scheme to resettle refugees in the UK. The National Refugee Welcome Board and Citizens UK played a key role in working with the government to make this happen. We know many groups across Britain are interested in the idea of becoming sponsors. As the experiences of groups in Canada have shown, becoming a sponsor can be one of the most rewarding ways of providing direct help to refugees. But it is also a big commitment. It would be great to see hundreds of groups coming forward to take part in sponsorship but first it is important to understand what it involves.

# THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT SCHEME

- It only applies to Syrians (not refugees of other nationalities)
- It only applies to Syrians currently living in the region of Syria (not those in other European countries or in Syria itself)
- Syrian refugees coming to the UK under community sponsorship will be included in the 20,000 resettlement quota up to 2020 that the government has already announced (so it will not increase the numbers resettled)
- Community sponsors will NOT be able to identify Syrians in the region that they wish to sponsor (so Syrians already in the UK will not be able to bring in family members)
- Community sponsorship will NOT be used to house and support unaccompanied children



# THE ENTITLEMENTS SPONSORED SYRIAN

## REFUGEES WILL HAVE

Refugees will be selected and screened for resettlement via community sponsorship by the UNHCR (the United Nations High Commission of Refugees) and the British government.

- Before they leave the region they will receive training on life in the UK and learn about their sponsoring group and the local area in which they will live
- Their flight to the UK will be paid for by the British government
- They will receive a 5-year humanitarian visa (and thereafter will be able to apply to stay in the UK and eventually become citizens)
- The adults will be entitled to work from Day 1 or to claim Job Seekers Allowance
- The children will be entitled to free schooling
- They will have free access to the NHS
- They will be able to claim Housing Benefit and other benefits

## WHO CAN BECOME A SPONSORING GROUP?

The beauty of community sponsorship is that all sorts of different groups of people can be involved

- Faith communities
- Local community groups
- Businesses
- Universities



It is even possible that individuals in a local area could get together (we can help that happen) and constitute themselves as a sponsoring group.

# A FIVE STEP PROCESS

## STEP 1

**Contact the National Refugee Welcome Board**

**(We can help to give initial advice and guidance on becoming a Community Sponsor)**

## STEP 2

**Fill in the official documentation**

**(This will include an application form and a resettlement plan  
we can help you to fill these in)**

## STEP 3

**Interaction and visit from officials from Syrian Resettlement Team**

**(Officials will want to make sure you are capable of being a Community Sponsoring group  
and will provide a lot of help and support)**

## STEP 4

**Government Approval to become a community sponsor**

## STEP 5

**Welcoming a refugee family at the airport**

As community sponsorship is new in Britain the time it takes to move from Step 1 and Step 2 is between 3 to 6 months. The process will become quicker as the scheme becomes more established.

## THE ROLE OF THE SPONSORING GROUP

The main responsibility and motivation of community sponsors is to provide a warm and personal welcome to the refugee family they are sponsoring. Other key tasks will include:

- Welcoming the refugee family at the airport and escorting them to their new home
- Providing a 'welcome pack' of food, other essentials and some cash to keep them going in the first few days
- Helping them to settle into their new home (how to work the appliances and sort out household bills)
- Helping them to register with the Job Centre, for benefits and with a GP
- Helping the children find their feet at their new school
- Helping the family to find their way around their new community (showing them public transport, leisure facilities and places of worship)
- Enrolling adults in official English classes (and helping them with English conversation)



# THE ESSENTIALS OF A SPONSORING GROUP

As the Canadian example has shown, becoming a community sponsor of refugees is an immensely rewarding experience for the people who take part and this is why so many people like you in Britain are keen to get involved. But you need more than just a warm heart and bags of enthusiasm and dedication. Below is the essential checklist for becoming a community sponsor. You will need to put a tick in each of the right-hand boxes if you are to become a community sponsor of refugees

Checklist of essentials	✓
You are a registered charity or attached to a registered charity (many faith groups and local bodies already have charitable status)	
You have named and committed people (at least five) who are able to support the refugee family	
You are fit and proper people to take responsibility for refugees (group members will have to take Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, for example)	
You have expertise in the group (or can partner with another group or organization) with experience of working with refugees or with housing or supporting vulnerable people.	
You can make a commitment of two years to support the sponsored refugees (although as they become more independent the level of help and support you need to provide will decrease)	
You have the time to attend training, do preparatory work with the Home Office and others, to draw up a resettlement plan and submit an application form etc.	
You can raise or have funds amounting to £4,500 per adult refugee (so for a family of 2 parents and 2 children, £9,000). You won't have to pass this money to the government or the local authority – and it may not all get spent – but it is required to show you can adequately support your refugee family	
You can find appropriate accommodation (a flat or house, NOT space in somebody else's home) for a refugee or refugee family for a two-year period, without help from the local authority	
If housing benefit doesn't cover the full cost of the accommodation help to pay the rent	
You can gain consent to operate as a community sponsorship group from your local authority (to ensure there are school places for the refugee children, for example)	

This might look like a daunting list at first. But we can help you with advice and guidance, and you will also find officials in the government's Syrian Resettlement Team eager to help you become a sponsoring group. So don't be put off. We hope you will want to proceed with the idea of becoming a community sponsor. If that is the case, get in touch

[communitysponsorship@citizenuk.org](mailto:communitysponsorship@citizenuk.org)

## **OTHER ROLES AND JOINING PEOPLE TOGETHER**

Not everyone interested in supporting community sponsorship will be in a place to form a sponsoring group. In other cases, groups may be very keen to become sponsors but some aspects of the process, particularly the financial commitment, makes it difficult. In either case, please don't give up. We, with the support of the government, are keen to explore all sorts of innovative and creative ways to develop sponsorship, particularly opportunities to link up people who may have the financial resources but not the time to be community

Sponsors, and people who are in the opposite position. Again, do get in touch

[communitysponsorship@citizensuk.org](mailto:communitysponsorship@citizensuk.org)

Thank you