

SPONSOR REFUGEES
Member of the Foundation for Community Sponsorship of England

SPONSOR  REFUGEES

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP



“I wasn’t looking to change my life – I have a busy job, teenage kids, lots of friends and am generally pretty fulfilled. But **Community Sponsorship did change my life**. Welcoming a family and having the privilege of resettling them into our rural Devon community turned my world upside down. On paper, it is the opportunity for ordinary people, like me, to provide a safe space for a vulnerable family who have been forced out of their homes due to war, conflict or persecution.

In reality it is far bigger than that. It is getting to know a broad cross-section of your local community who share the same values as you, but you may never have come to know. It is the bond that grows between that group as you meet together and push and pull over how we can best prepare and care for the family. It is then greeting the family at the airport and getting plunged into their world of life and colour and different foods, different perspectives, different cultural understandings, different life experiences and an immediate closeness that takes you by surprise. All of which, brings such a richness to your life that you never even realised you were missing.

This might explain why we went on to do it 4 more times and are still trying for more.”



Susannah Baker

Trustee of The Pickwell Foundation and Lead Sponsor
for refugee welcome groups across North Devon.

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What is Community Sponsorship?

Community sponsorship is a practical way for ordinary citizens to directly **increase** the number of refugees who can **safely** resettle to the UK and by involving the community, **improves** the chances of refugees to settle in, learn English and find work.

Many communities have already benefited from Community Sponsorship as the process **brings neighbours together**. Additionally, it sends a strong message from the British public that **refugees are welcome in the UK**.

Anyone can sponsor. There are currently **more than 240 groups across the UK**, some were already established groups, others began as friends with a shared passion and others were neighbours who had never met before!



We are a project powered by the charity [Citizens UK](#) – the home of community organising in the UK. We have lots of experience helping communities to welcome refugee families across the country through this scheme.

We can provide you with information and support every step along the way, as well as frequent training sessions and “Lunch & Learns”. Whether you are just starting to form a group or have been with the family for a year, you can always seek help and support not only from our team but also our large, friendly network of Community Sponsorship groups.

Find out more about us at:

www.sponsorrefugees.org

Our Goal for 2021 is to bring 200 new families to the U.K. but we need your help to make this possible!

Why get involved?

“This was a straightforward decision. Not only were we able to help provide a safe home for a family and see first-hand the transformative impact, but we also worked with other faith groups and community members, strengthening the neighbourly bonds between us all”.

Esmat Jeraj, Abraham’s Tent

“The experience has been completely transformative for my community. It gave us the opportunity to do something hopeful when we weren’t sure how to help and has brought together our community in extraordinary ways. Whatever we have given has been returned ten-fold by the most remarkable, inspirational and resilient family I have ever met”.

Nick Coke, Raynes Park Community Church

What are the benefits of Community Sponsorship?

- It is a practical way for local people to respond to the global refugee crisis
- It is a way to directly increase the number of refugees who can safely resettle to the UK
 - It makes maximum use of the capacity, commitment and networks of citizens to help refugees
- It improves the chances of refugees to settle in, learn English and find work
 - It strengthens community bonds
- It sends a strong message that refugees are welcome in the UK



[Start](#) or [join](#) a group near you and resettle a family in your community!

Stages of Community Sponsorship

1. Building a Strong Group

Building a resilient core group is one of the first steps in the Community Sponsorship journey.

Groups come in a variety of different sizes, but we recommend having at least 8-12 core group members, with a fringe of additional supporters to help with odd jobs such as preparing the house and fundraising. community.



You can find group members for a variety of places from religious congregations to work colleagues to teammates at your local sports club. You could also post on local Facebook groups or put a call out in a local newspaper.

Start by reaching out to local institutions and community leaders and arrange to have a coffee to talk about your project.

[We have more guidance on this here](#)

2. Choose a Lead Sponsor

A key requirement of the scheme is that you partner with and apply through a registered charity. This is known as a “Lead Sponsor” organisation.

We recommend that you choose an experienced Lead Sponsor, as they will be able to guide you throughout the process, and make it much easier for you.



Sponsor Refugees are the largest Lead Sponsor in the UK. We are working with over 40 groups in every part of the country, and have a dedicated team to support you.

There are other experienced charities that could take on this role too, depending on your faith or location, such as Caritas (Catholics), Charis (SW England) or Salvation Army.

[Find out more here](#)

3. Prepare an Application

To welcome and resettle a family, you will need to get consent from your Local Authority and to submit an application to the Home Office. This is to ensure that you are a committed and skilled group of people with a detailed plan for the refugee family's resettlement, integration and independence.



Don't worry, it might sound intimidating – but your Lead Sponsor will be able to guide you through this.

We also have a handy, detailed **online portal** that will take you through every step. The application process varies, but it usually takes around six months.



[Access the Community Sponsorship Portal here](#)

4. Fundraising

Community Sponsorship groups will need to raise £9,000 to cover additional costs of resettlement, such as professional interpreters, a deposit and furnishing the house. We have been amazed at how easily groups have managed to raise the funds. People are really willing to give to a grassroots project with such a tangible outcome.

 Online Fundraising	 Share With Your Church
 Set a Challenge	 Social Media
 Leaflets	 Events in Your Institution
 Local Funding	 Public Collections

Click for more [ideas](#) and the [story](#) of a fundraising journey in Wendover, Buckinghamshire

5. Find a House

You will need to find a house for the family to rent for a minimum of two years.

They will be entitled to be able to claim social welfare, so you don't need to pay for rent yourselves – but you do need to find a landlord that is willing to rent at [Local Housing Allowance rates](#).

Finding an affordable house can be tricky but there are lots of people ready to help, groups you can reach out to and methods of raising awareness, such as:

Housing Associations

Social Media

Leaflet drive



Buy a House

Letting Agents

Religious Organisations

[Click here for more guidance](#)

6. Welcome the Family

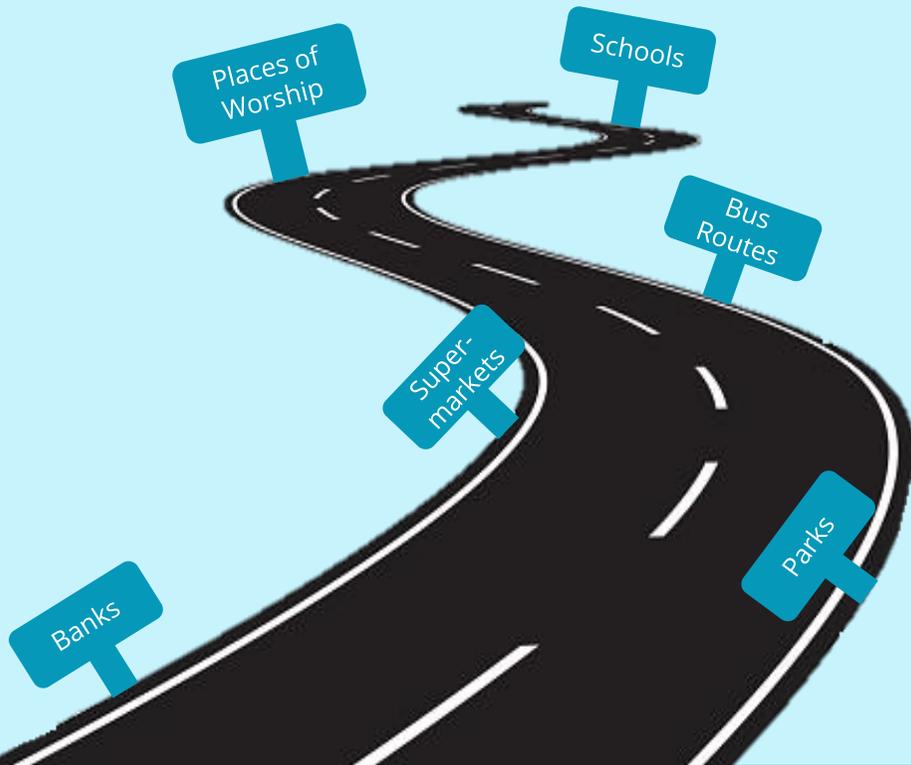
Time to prepare the house for arrival! The family will arrive with almost nothing so will need the house to be fully [furnished](#) with some helpful information provided in their language, and stocked with food for their first few days.

When it is finally the day of arrival, you will get to greet the family at the airport and welcome them into your community!



7. Show the family the area

In the first few weeks after arrival it is nice to have a trip out around the local area to familiarise the family with their new home and identify all relevant amenities. You can also help the family to learn how to use public transport so they are able to be more independent.



8. Help sign up for services

In the first few weeks and months, your group will need to register your new family with local services.

The most important is signing the family up to welfare benefits so they have income and getting bank accounts set up so they can receive it.

These jobs will be divided between members of the group so they are more manageable – within the group there will be a Benefits Lead, Language Lead etc.

TO DO LIST

- Universal credit
- GP & Dentist
- Schools
- Bank accounts
- Place of religion
- English classes
- Volunteering roles

There is lots of support for this available on our step-by-step [portal](#)

9. English Language

You will need to provide the following:



8 hours per week up to 12 months formal English Language (ESOL) tuition



Opportunities for informal learning such as conversations sessions



Provide opportunities for online learning during the pandemic

[Click here](#) to see the unique ESOL experience of a group in rural Pembrokeshire.



You will also need to provide interpreters.

The families we support mostly speak Arabic but sometimes other languages. The Home Office will ask which language you can provide for and match a family based on this. There are plenty of ways you can find interpreters:



Volunteer interpreters from Mosques, local groups or even universities



Booking free interpreters available for services such as the NHS or Job Centre



Paying for professional interpreters – this is where the £9k you raised comes in handy

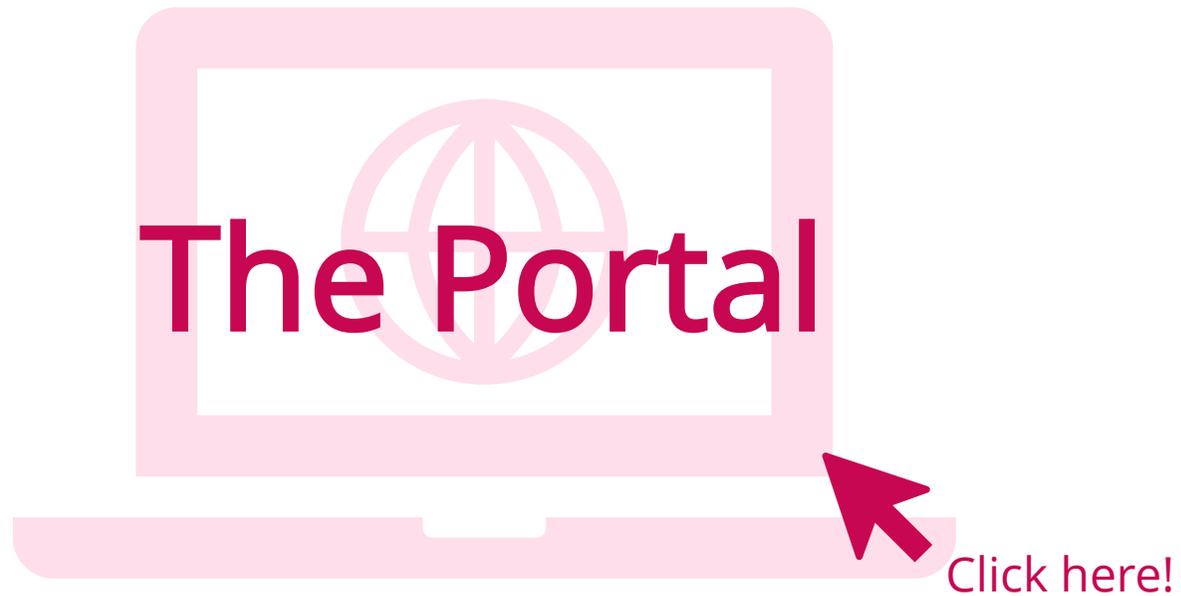


Less formal community activities such as clubs or playgroups

10. Enjoy the times ahead!



After 12 months of supporting the family become part of your local community, you will start the transition to independence. While you may no longer be providing formal support, we hope you will have built relationships that last forever!



Our portal is a detailed step-by-step guide to Community Sponsorship that will support you along your journey:
https://citizens-uk.teachable.com/p/community_sponsorship

Other Ways To Get Involved

Fundraising

If you can't directly sponsor a family, help fundraise for existing community sponsorship groups to get them to the £9,000 target.



Falmouth & Penryn –
Jumble Sale



South Leics – 80s themed
disco



Whitechapel Welcomes –
Boxing Day Dip



WRAP – Cycling from
Aleppo to Wendover



Falmouth & Penryn – Made
their own merchandise



NE1 – Walking the distance
of Newcastle to Damascus



Whitechapel Welcomes –
Ran a Half Marathon



Oxford Welcomes –
Knitting a Blanket

Community



Have you considered offering formal or informal **language support** to a refugee family? The most common feedback we receive from resettled individuals is they would like more opportunities to learn and practice English as this is the most important part of integration.



Could you or your business support a resettled family find **employment** or **voluntary experience**? We have had some amazing success stories including Samir Hamyeh who opened a restaurant in Manchester in 2019.



If you are not able to start your own community sponsorship group, why not **get involved with an existing group** in your local area as a volunteer? There are many roles in community sponsorship, look here for groups in your area:
https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/community_sponsorship_map



Spreading awareness of Community Sponsorship is so important! The more people we can reach with our message, the more groups form, and the more families we can support! So please share this booklet, and **spread the word** with your friends, family and community!

Please share this information pack with anyone you know who might be interested or can continue to spread awareness of Community Sponsorship

Frequently Asked Questions

For more FAQs please visit our website: <https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/faq>

Q: How long does Community Sponsorship last?

A: The application process can take 6-12 months but this does differ depending on your local council. Following the family's arrival, the group will need to provide one year of full support. The house you find will need to be available for the family for 24 months.

Q: What is the first step?

A: Excited about Community Sponsorship? Start reaching out to people and forming your group! During the pandemic, many groups have formed online through social media, the local press and community newsletters. Please do reach out to us too for more advice, information and access to our network of current sponsors.

Q: Why do we need to raise £9000?

A: The money your group raises will go towards paying for necessities before the family's arrival such as a house deposit, furnishings, mobile phones, laptops, school uniforms etc. as well as interpreters and transportation costs. The family will be entitled to claim social welfare payments, so you are not expected to pay for their day-to-day living costs such as rent, food or utilities.

Q: Why should I help resettle the refugees instead of the council?

A: Bringing refugee families to the UK through Community Sponsorship is **IN ADDITION** to those resettled by local councils, so you will be directly increasing the number of people who can find safety in the UK.

Q: How are the families chosen?

A: The majority of refugees who are resettled are from Syria, although the scheme will broaden to people from other nationalities from 2021. Refugees can apply to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) to be resettled to another country. After being interviewed and screened, they are referred to countries with resettlement programmes. The UK Government partners with UNHCR to identify the most vulnerable, who are then matched with local councils or sponsorship groups. Community sponsorship groups cannot 'name' families for resettlement and Sponsor Refugees has no influence over who is resettled.

Start your journey with us today!



communitysponsorship@citizensuk.org



<https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/>



@sponsorrefugee