



Home Office



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government



Department  
for International  
Development

# Full Community Sponsorship

## Guidance for prospective sponsors



## Foreword by the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

We thank you for your interest in supporting vulnerable people fleeing conflict. The response of the British public to the crisis in Syria is something of which we as a nation ought to be proud. We have been touched by the compassion shown for those in need and the offers of support that have been made. There are countless examples of people around the UK putting words into action and supporting vulnerable people arriving in the UK.

In addition, local authorities and local communities play a pivotal role in supporting vulnerable families to resettle and adapt to life in the UK, with many already actively involved in delivering the Government's commitment to resettling 20,000 vulnerable Syrians in the life of this parliament. They will be crucial partners for you, and we encourage you to work in close collaboration with your local authority in developing your proposals.

We are delighted to introduce, for the first time in the UK, a full community sponsorship scheme to empower and enable community groups to take on the challenging but rewarding role of welcoming and supporting a resettled family in the UK. We hope that this new approach to resettlement will help bring communities together and support these often traumatised and vulnerable families as they rebuild their lives, and contribute to and thrive in our country.



**Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP**



**Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP**

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## Introduction

We know that many organisations are already actively involved in supporting refugees to resettle in the UK. This document sets out a framework that enables community groups to take a lead role in resettling families. It explains how the process will work, the criteria prospective sponsors must meet, and how to apply.

## Background

The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was launched in January 2014 and has helped those in the greatest need, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children risk. The Prime Minister announced on 7 September 2015 that the scheme would be expanded to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament. We are working closely with UNHCR to identify vulnerable Syrians in need of resettlement and whose particular needs can only be met in countries like the UK.

We have worked closely with the UNHCR to design a resettlement scheme that will protect the most vulnerable children in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region affected by the conflict. On the UNHCR's recommendation, the scheme will extend from unaccompanied children to vulnerable children accompanied by their family, such as those threatened with child labour, child marriage and other forms of abuse or exploitation. It will be open to all at risk groups and nationalities within the region. Several hundred individuals will be resettled over the next year with up to 3,000 resettled over the lifetime of this Parliament.

Local authorities, often with the support of community groups and the voluntary sector, have played a vital role in helping those arriving here to feel welcome and adjust to a new life in the UK, and will continue to do so.

## What is full community sponsorship?

Full community sponsorship is a ground-breaking new development for resettlement in the UK. It enables community groups to become directly involved in supporting the resettlement of vulnerable people fleeing conflict and in need of humanitarian protection (hereafter referred to as 'resettled families') in the UK. It encourages innovation in resettlement that has the potential to promote positive resettlement outcomes, both for the resettled families and local communities.

## What does a community sponsor do?

Sponsorship is a significant undertaking and you should not underestimate the commitment and resilience your organisation will need to show.

As a community sponsor, you will be allocated a family fleeing conflict, and it will be your responsibility to support the resettled family from the moment of arrival in the UK. This will include:



- meeting the family at the airport;
- providing a warm welcome and cultural orientation;
- providing housing;
- supporting access to medical and social services;
- English language tuition; and
- support towards employment and self-sufficiency.

Your formal responsibility to support the resettled family will last for one year, with the exception of housing, for which the responsibility lasts for two years. You may choose to provide support beyond this, according to the needs of the resettled family. Further details on the minimum requirements for supporting a resettled family can be found in **Annex A**.

### What is a resettled family?

Resettled families are vulnerable people fleeing conflict. Most are Syrian and some may be from other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Families to be resettled in the UK will be referred by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which identifies vulnerable people for resettlement in the UK. Note that sponsors are not able to identify or select a specific individual or group to sponsor.

Each resettled family will be different but they will all have suffered the loss of their home. Many will have lost loved ones, friends and family, and witnessed the horrors of war. Some may have specific medical needs or disabilities.

It is important to recognise that not all resettled families will be happy initially to have come to the UK. The relief at arriving in a safe place will be countered by grief over what has been left behind and possibly survivors' guilt as well.

This is where community sponsors can help: supporting a resettled family by making them feel welcome in the UK, helping them to adjust and make a new life for themselves, and to stand on their own two feet. The support of a community sponsor will have a crucial impact on the family's future happiness and wellbeing.

The resettled family will be granted Humanitarian Protection, meaning they will have permission to stay in the UK for a period of five years. During this time, they will have the right to work and to claim relevant benefits. After five years the resettled family will have the option of applying to extend their leave in the UK.

The box below illustrates the circumstances of three different families accepted for resettlement in the UK.

**Case study 1**

A family made up of a couple, both in their mid thirties, with four children, daughters aged 11 years and 10 years, and sons aged 6 years and 5 years. They are a Sunni Muslim family who fled Syria in 2014 out of fear that the rebels were advancing towards their area. Noises from the bomb explosions were getting closer and the children were afraid. They decided to flee because many of their neighbours had left leaving them vulnerable. The principal applicant previously worked as a labourer and his wife was a housewife. Both adults can speak, read and write Arabic. Two of the children are disabled and will require specialist medical care. Both adults also suffer with health problems and will likely require medical assistance. The family require a wheelchair accessible property.

**Case study 2**

A family made up of a couple, aged 36 years and 27 years, with four children, daughters aged 10 years and 4 years, and sons aged 4 years and 2 years. They are a Sunni Muslim family who fled Syria in 2011 as they lived in an area where there were active demonstrations by armed protesters. They feared for their lives because of rumours that the Syrian Armed Forces were about to launch a wide scale attack in their area. They have lived illegally in Lebanon since 2015 due to the high costs to renew their residency permits. The principal applicant previously worked as a labourer and his wife was a housewife. Both adults can speak, read and write Arabic. Their twin children suffer from medical complications as a result of brain injury during birth and will require specialist medical care. Both adults are also in need of medical assistance. The family require a ground floor property.

**Case study 3**

A family made up of a couple, aged 52 years and 44 years, with two adult children, (a son aged 32 years and a daughter aged 20 years) and a second son, aged 10 years. They are a Sunni Muslim family who fled from Syria in 2013 when their neighbourhood was bombed. Their home was hit by a rocket while some of the family were inside and the father's place of work was destroyed in an explosion. The principal applicant previously worked as an Electronics Mechanic and his wife was a housewife. The family all speak Arabic and the adult children can speak some English. However, most of the family do not read or write. Both adult children are blind and will require specialist medical care. The other two adults in the family are also in need of medical assistance.



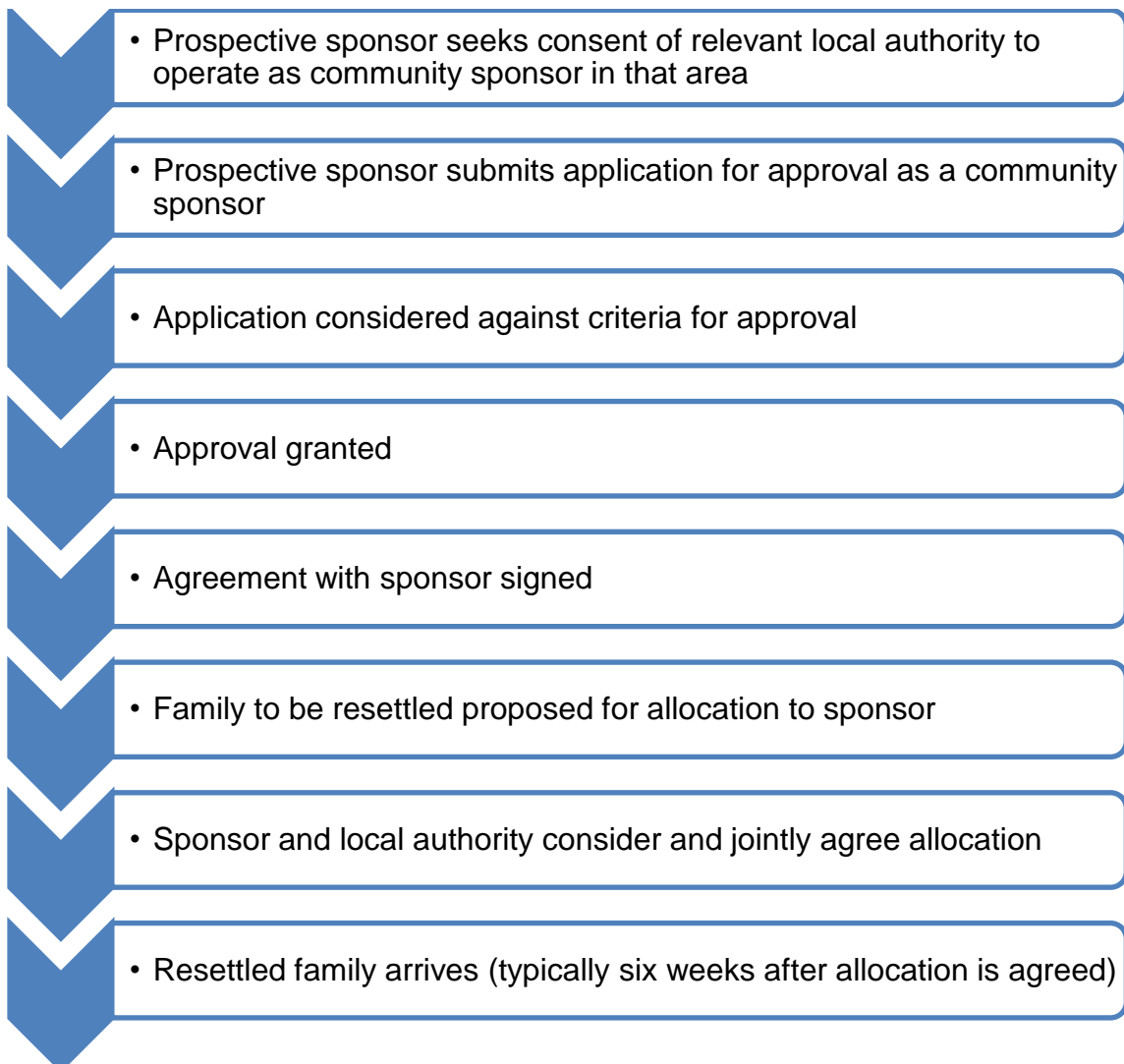
## Can anyone be a community sponsor?

Supporting a vulnerable resettled family is a significant responsibility. The Home Office will approve every sponsor. A separate approval is required for each resettled family sponsored. The approval process is designed to establish that the prospective sponsor:

- a) has sufficient resources (housing, financial and personnel) to support a resettled family;
- b) has a credible plan for supporting a resettled family, backed by relevant experience; and
- c) does not present a risk to the resettled family.

You can apply to be approved as a sponsor using the application form and resettlement plan template. The Home Office will assess your suitability to be a community sponsor, according to the criteria set out below.

## Approval process





## What criteria must a community sponsor meet?

### Organisation status and lead sponsor

Your organisation must have status as either:

- a charity, registered with the Charities Commission in England and Wales, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) in Scotland, or the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland;
- an individual or body falling within section 10(2)(a) of the Charities Act 2011; or
- a Community Interest Company, registered with Companies House.

There must be a named individual with responsibility for the sponsorship arrangement, the 'lead sponsor'. The lead sponsor should hold a permanent and senior position within the organisation. Typically, they will be a member of the board of the charity or community interest company, or hold the position of Chief Executive or director or equivalent. There must be a clear line of accountability between the lead sponsor and the personnel delivering the resettlement plan.

### Experience

You must be able to demonstrate experience, or be working in partnership with people or organisations with experience in working with refugees or supporting vulnerable people.

### Financial resources

You must provide evidence that you have adequate resources to support a resettled family. We estimate that you should have available funding of at least £9,000<sup>1</sup>. The level of resourcing behind each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If your organisation **typically has an annual income of £100,000 or more**<sup>2</sup>, you should provide a letter from the chief finance officer for your organisation explaining that at least £9,000 has been ring-fenced for the purposes of sponsorship and will be available to use if necessary.

If your organisation's **typical annual income is less than £100,000**, you should provide a letter from the chief finance officer for your organisation explaining that at least £9,000 has been ring-fenced for the purposes of sponsorship and will be available to use if necessary, and evidence of the funds in the form of a bank statement.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure is based on £4,500 per adult and is to demonstrate that you have the financial means to support a resettled family (such as the initial provision of cash on arrival and to fund English language tuition and interpretation costs); it is not a suggested minimum or maximum spend. No figure is applied to children because they will receive the majority of their support through the education system. Most resettled families contain two adults but some will contain three or four adults – evidence of additional funding for families with more than two adults may be requested.

<sup>2</sup> As evidenced by the previous two years of published accounts with the Charities Commission or Companies House

## Housing

You must be able to demonstrate that you have suitable and sustainable accommodation for a resettled family, and that it will be available for a resettled family to use for a minimum of two years.

If you do not have accommodation immediately available but are able to demonstrate that you will be able to obtain appropriate accommodation in time, then we may approve your application on condition that suitable accommodation is secured.

If the cost of the accommodation exceeds Local Housing Allowance rates, you must demonstrate how you will meet the additional cost.

Further details on housing requirements can be found in the statement of requirements at **Annex A**.

## Local authority consent

You must have the consent of the local authority<sup>3</sup> in which you wish to receive a resettled family. You must obtain written evidence from the local authority (the format to be determined by the local authority) that they consent to the approval of your application. Grounds on which a local authority might object are:

- a) insufficient capacity to accommodate a family in the proposed housing area (e.g. lack of school places);
- b) concerns about community tensions in the proposed housing area;
- c) where they have reason to believe that your organisation is not suitable to undertake the resettlement of vulnerable adults and children; or
- d) another appropriate reason.

The regional strategic migration partnership (contact details at **Annex B**) will be able to advise you on the appropriate person to consult within the local authority.

## Plan for resettlement

You must produce a detailed and credible plan for how you will deliver effective resettlement support to a resettled family. A resettlement plan template, incorporating the minimum requirements (at **Annex A**), can be found on GOV.UK.

## Safeguarding

You must be able to demonstrate that you have robust safeguarding policy and procedures in place to ensure the suitability and good character of the people providing support for a resettled family. This should include consideration of whether Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are appropriate.

Please see the GOV.UK website for more information on eligibility for Disclosure and Barring Service checks: <https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check>.

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<sup>3</sup> In two tier county areas you will need to consult both the district and county council. The regional strategic migration partnership will be able to advise how best to do this.



You must have appropriate reporting and escalation procedures within your organisation to ensure safeguarding concerns are dealt with appropriately. This should include a process whereby a resettled family can escalate concerns about the support they receive or individuals providing that support.

## **How will the Home Office process applications for approval as a community sponsor?**

The Home Office will assess the evidence you provide as part of your application against the above criteria. We may also carry out checks and visit you to assess your application in more detail.

### **Checks on personnel**

We may conduct checks on your organisation and the lead sponsor. These include checks against our records and the police national computer, or its equivalent in Northern Ireland. We may make these checks when considering your application and may repeat them at any time.

If we consider that your organisation or the lead sponsor are not fit and proper to assume the responsibility of resettling a vulnerable family we may refuse your application or revoke your approval. Reasons for this include but are not limited to the provision of false information, criminal convictions, or immigration offences.

### **Visits**

We may visit you before a decision on your application is made. You will be given advance notice of a visit. A visit will allow a more detailed assessment of your application. In particular, we may check that:

- the information you provided is accurate;
- you are able to support a resettled family;
- your safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriate; and
- the accommodation you intend to provide is suitable.

### **Successful application**

If you meet all of the criteria above we will approve your application.

This approval will be reviewed after six months if your organisation has not been allocated a resettled family within this time, and you may be asked to submit a new application.

### **Unsuccessful application**

If you do not meet all of the criteria for sponsorship, as set out above, then your application will be refused.

You will receive a written explanation stating the reasons for the refusal. There is no right of appeal.

A new application will not be considered until 180 days have passed since a decision was made to refuse your application.

There is no guarantee that your new application will be successful.

## **What happens after approval?**

### **Agreement**

You will sign a formal agreement with the Home Office, setting out your responsibilities and those of the Home Office. A sample agreement can be found on GOV.UK. You should read this agreement in full before submitting an application.

### **Sponsor induction**

You will be expected to attend an induction event on sponsorship, arranged by the Home Office, which will help you to prepare to receive a resettled family, as well as being an opportunity to network and learn from other sponsors.

### **Allocating a family for resettlement**

The Home Office will ensure that security checks are carried out on all individuals to be resettled in the UK. We will arrange for the resettled family's visa and travel to the UK, and their Biometric Residence Permit on arrival.

We will work with the sponsor and local authority to agree the allocation of a suitable family. The Home Office will identify and propose a suitable family for resettlement. The community sponsor and the local authority will be expected to confirm that the proposed family can be accommodated, usually within two weeks.

Once confirmation has been received, the family to be resettled will be notified. Flights will be arranged, with arrival planned for approximately six weeks after the family has been notified. The date of arrival will be agreed with the community sponsor. You will be provided with information about the family to support your preparations.

### **Arrival**

You will make arrangements to meet the resettled family at the airport and commence delivery of your resettlement plan.

## **What are the sponsor's obligations following approval?**

### **Record Keeping and Privacy**

You must keep records and copies of the resettled family's key documents, including their UNHCR registration, Entry clearance document, their Biometric Residence Permit, National Insurance number and NHS number. You must ensure that data is held securely, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA).

Maintaining the privacy of the resettled family is important and you must:



- not issue anything that identifies the resettled family externally, as being refugees or benefitting from Humanitarian Protection; and
- get informed consent from the resettled family in relation to any media exposure, requests or interest.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

You will be required to provide relevant information to the Home Office on request to support monitoring and evaluation of your sponsorship arrangement and the wider sponsorship scheme. This is likely to include evidence of your delivery of your resettlement plan, as well as outcomes for the resettled family.

We may visit you after the resettled family has arrived, to support monitoring and evaluation of your sponsorship arrangement. We will normally provide advance notice of a visit but may visit unannounced in some circumstances.

### **Use of Information**

We may use the information that you provide to us when you apply for permission to sponsor or at any time throughout the period of your licence in accordance with the Home Office Personal Information Charter.

In certain circumstances, details may be passed to other government departments and agencies, local authorities and fraud prevention agencies (such as HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Department of Work and Pensions and Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance System (CIFAS)) for immigration purposes, the prevention of fraud and criminality and/or to help them carry out their functions.

These bodies may provide the Home Office with information about you and your employees. Further details explaining when information may be passed to other bodies, and how that information may be used, is available on the GOV.UK website at: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/personal-information-charter](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/personal-information-charter)

## **Annex A – Statement of requirements for sponsors**

### **Accommodation**

Source suitable and sustainable accommodation.

The accommodation must be available for use by the resettled family for a minimum period of two years, with a two year lease.

The accommodation must be available to the resettled family at a cost not exceeding Local Housing Allowance rates for the two year period.

The accommodation must have independent access and provide adequate privacy.

The accommodation should comply with local authority guidance on occupation levels.

The property must be in a proper state of structural repair, must be maintained throughout in a good state of repair with safe electricity and/or gas supplies, and with adequate ventilation and lighting.

The property should be appropriately furnished with:

- an appropriate number and type of beds;
- a toilet, a washbasin and a fixed bath or shower with hot and cold water;
- a fixed heating appliance in each room, which is capable of providing effective heating and which the tenant can control;
- facilities for cooking and for the hygienic preparation and storage of food (for example, a 4-ring hob with oven and grill, fridge-freezer, microwave oven, and kitchen sink);
- access to a washing facilities (e.g. a washing machine or nearby launderette);
- access to facilities to dry clothes (e.g. outdoor clothes line or indoor clothes-drying rack); and
- a fire blanket and smoke alarms (including a carbon monoxide alarm where appropriate).

Assist with registration with utility companies and making sure arrangements are made for payment (no pre pay/card accounts).

Provide information to resettled persons on accommodation and health and safety, and emergency contact point.

### **Welcome to the UK**

Meet and greet arriving family from the relevant airport and escort them to their accommodation, briefing them on how to use the amenities.

Provide a welcome pack of groceries, the content of which should take into account the culture and nationality of the resettled family.

Provide £200 per person (adults and children) in cash on arrival for initial expenses including groceries, toiletries, clothes, and ensure the family have sufficient funds to live on while their claim for benefits is being processed (e.g. for a family of five the sponsor would provide £1,000).

Provide information and support to access local shops and transport.

### **Establishing a life in the UK**

Ensure resettled family members receive their Biometric Residence Permits within 7 days of arrival in the UK.

Assist with registering children with local schools as soon as possible – to commence registration within 2 weeks of arrival.

Arrange for English language tuition for adults as soon as possible and within one month of arrival.

- Provide formal English language tuition by a suitably qualified ESOL teacher, for a minimum of 10 hours per week for the first twelve weeks, followed by a minimum of 5 hours per week for the remaining nine months.
- There is an expectation that formal English language tuition is supplemented on a regular basis by less formal conversational English.
- Whilst it is recognised that progress will differ between individuals, there is an expectation of at least one ESOL level of progress (in speaking and listening, reading, and writing) over the course of the year.
- Provide the opportunity to obtain an English language qualification at the appropriate level, where this will support access to employment and education.

Support attendance at local Job Centre appointments for benefit assessments, within two weeks of arrival.

Assist with registration with a local GP, within one week of arrival.

Advise on accessing appropriate mental health services and specialist services for victims of torture as appropriate.

Provide assistance with access to employment, including development of curriculum vitae, and education.

Provide assistance with accessing digital services.

Make aware of, and support attendance at, local community activities, within and without the sponsoring organisation, such as children's playgroups, coffee mornings, local clubs, local events, etc.

Provide interpreting services, as required, for 12 months from arrival.



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## Annex B - Regional strategic migration partnerships - contact details

Region	Officer lead	Email	Website
East of England	Gosia Strona	Malgorzata.Strona@eelga.gov.uk	smp.eelga.gov.uk
East Midlands	Sarah Short	Sarah.Short@emcouncils.gov.uk	www.emcouncils.gov.uk/Strategic-Migration-Partnership
London	-	mayor@london.gov.uk	www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/encouraging-integration#Stub-107653
North East	Janine Hartley	Janine_Hartley@middlesbrough.gov.uk	www.nesmp.org.uk
North West	Katy Wood	K.wood@manchester.gov.uk	-
Northern Ireland	Ken Bishop	ken.bishop@nilga.org	www.migrationni.org
Scotland	Derek Mitchell	Derek@cosla.gov.uk	www.migrationscotland.org.uk
South East	Roy Millard	RoyMillard@secouncils.gov.uk	www.secouncils.gov.uk/about-us/about-sespm
South West	Sarah Short	Sarah.Short@swcouncils.gov.uk	www.swcouncils.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=3141
Wales	Anne Hubbard	anne.hubbard@wlga.gov.uk	www.wsmp.org.uk
West Midlands	Dally Panesar	Dalvinder.Panesar@birmingham.gov.uk	wmsmp.org.uk
Yorkshire and Humberside	-	admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk	www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk