

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 09 September 2019
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Approval to consent to a Community Sponsorship Application
Purpose of Report:	To request Cabinet agree to consent to a Community Sponsorship Application
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services
Responsible Officer:	Miles Punter, Director of Environment & Housing Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Committee Reports, Legal Services Operational Manager, Accountancy Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills Operational Manager, Public Housing Services
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May 2016, Cardiff Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council agreed to participate in the resettlement of vulnerable Syrian refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) on a regional basis, under a three year Collaborative Agreement. • In July 2016, the Community Sponsorship Scheme was launched as a strand of the VPRS, to enable community groups (sponsors) to become directly involved in refugee resettlement. The Home Office intends to resettle one hundred and twenty families under this scheme. • Croeso Llantwit has requested formal consent from the Vale of Glamorgan Council to its sponsorship application to accommodate and support one refugee family in the town, and Cabinet approval is therefore now being sought. 	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet considers the content of this report and agrees to consent to the Croeso Llantwit Community Sponsorship application.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The Community Sponsor ("the Sponsor") is required to obtain written consent from the Local Authority, in order for the application to proceed for detailed evaluation and approval by the Home Office. Croeso Llantwit consulted with the Local Authority throughout the development of the resettlement plan and engaged openly with the subsequent analysis by regional stakeholders. The Authority is therefore satisfied with the sustainability of the application and that all foreseeable risks have been mitigated by the sponsor.

1. Background

- 1.1 In January 2014 the UK Government made a commitment to resettle Syrian refugees who had been displaced to neighbouring countries as the result of civil war. In September 2015, the UK Government announced the formation of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) ("the Programme") which is run in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The primary purpose is to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees from the region over the remainder of the current parliament, by March 2020.
- 1.2 According to the Department for International Development (source Syria UNHCR), in March 2019, 400,000 people are estimated to have been killed since the civilian-military conflict began. A further 5.6 million Syrian refugees are still living in deteriorating conditions in neighbouring countries
- 1.3 According to the most recent data published by the Home Office (in February 2019), 14,945 refugees (including dependants) had been resettled in the UK by the end of December 2018 under the VPRS. Of that, 959 refugees had been resettled in Wales. Community Sponsorship is an integral part of the Home Office pledge to resettle 20,000 refugees by March 2020.
- 1.4 Local Authorities throughout the United Kingdom, including all twenty two Welsh Authorities, have participated in the voluntary resettlement of refugees (from Syria) since its inception. On 21st September 2015, Cabinet supported proposals

to work in partnership with Cardiff Council (Cabinet Minute C2920 refers) for up to three years, to deliver the scheme on a regional basis.

- 1.5** On 20th May 2019, the Managing Director used Emergency Powers to approve recommendations, on behalf of Cabinet, to continue the regional partnership arrangements and to extend the Collaborative Agreement with Cardiff Council for up to six years, in line with the lifespan of the VPRS.
- 1.6** The Community Sponsorship Scheme was launched in July 2016, to enable community groups (sponsors) to become directly involved in refugee resettlement. The Home Office intends to resettle one hundred and twenty families under this scheme.
- 1.7** In accordance with Statement of Requirements set out in the Guidance for Prospective Sponsors (“the guidance”) (Appendix One), community sponsors are required to provide accommodation for two years and integration support for at least the first year following arrival the UK.
- 1.8** As set out in the guidance, each prospective group must apply to the Home Office for ‘final approval’ to sponsor a family, once they’ve received consent from the Local Authority. The Home Office is responsible for assessing each application on a case-by-case basis, and separate approval is required for each family sponsored.
- 1.9** Sponsors may apply for ‘approval in principle’ if they are not immediately able to satisfy all of the essential criteria, allowing additional time to obtain the necessary financial resources and to secure suitable accommodation, before they can receive ‘final approval’.
- 1.10** Sponsors are encouraged to liaise with Local Authorities early in the application process, to foster a positive working relationship and to cultivate links with relevant service areas and internal/external partners. Step 2 of the application process requires sponsors to obtain written evidence from the Local Authority that it consents to the approval of the application.
- 1.11** The Vale of Glamorgan Council received its first request for consent in January 2018 from Croeso Penarth and, in May 2018, Cabinet approved recommendations to consent to the proposal, following extensive consultation with regional stakeholders (Cabinet Minute C318 Refers)
- 1.12** Following Home Office approval, the sponsored family arrived in September 2018 and has received intensive support from volunteer organisations throughout its first year of stay. Through coordinated interventions, the family is making steady progress towards independent living and integration into the community.

- 1.13** The Home Office continues to monitor the family's welfare and integration progress, in line with the Statement of Requirements set out in the guidance, through a series of coordinated visits, which are attended by the Authority (Regional Resettlement Co-ordinator).
- 1.14** The Vale of Glamorgan Council has worked closely with core members of Croeso Llantwit during the past year, to provide guidance and support during the development of its sponsorship application, based on its own experiences of refugee resettlement.
- 1.15** The Authority has taken reasonable steps to ensure the group has considered all operational aspects of the resettlement process in preparation for the rigours of supporting a vulnerable refugee family.
- 1.16** The sponsorship application was evaluated by stakeholders from the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff Council, in continuation of the regional partnership approach. Stakeholders considered a range of factors, including capacity in the local housing market; school capacity; community cohesion; adult language tuition and wider integration-related matters. Such delivery factors were considered alongside the risks and implications for the Local Authority, in the event of a breakdown of the sponsorship arrangements post-arrival.
- 1.17** A regional panel, attended by Croeso Llantwit, met on the 6th June to examine the operational aspects of the sponsorship application in greater detail. Panel members noted the detailed and comprehensive responses provided by the Lead Sponsors, who set out a clear and cohesive strategy in full consideration of local resource and infrastructure implications.
- 1.18** It is the shared opinion of the regional panel that Croeso Llantwit has fully considered the implications of community sponsorship, including the likely demands on volunteers' time and other operational challenges, and has mitigated against foreseeable risks to a satisfactory standard.
- 1.19** In consideration of the evaluation conducted by regional stakeholders, Members are asked to approve the recommendation to consent to the application from Croeso Llantwit

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Local Authorities are not required to provide accommodation and support to sponsored refugees, however, there are capacity and resource implications for local schools. In mitigation, if the Home Office does approve the application, the

Authority will support the Home Office to identify a suitable family by using accurate admissions data to identify gaps in all primary and secondary year groups.

- 2.2 In the event of a breakdown of a community sponsorship arrangement, such that a Sponsor becomes unable to deliver their commitments, care of the resettled family would fall to the host Local Authority.
- 2.3 The Guidance for Local Authorities (Appendix Two, page 14) states that “In the event that a sponsorship arrangement breaks down, an appropriate level of funding will be made available to the local authority, within the existing tariff structure, to provide the necessary support to the resettled family. It is intended that the local authority will not suffer financially.”
- 2.4 In the event that a family becomes homeless the local authority would be expected to consider housing for the family in accordance with their normal procedures. Though the circumstances which lead to homelessness are individual and complex, the Authority is satisfied the sponsors will make all reasonable endeavours to ensure the family is not put at risk, including for example, using its donated funds to support the rental cost of accommodation.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 Looking to the long term – in its evaluation of the resettlement application, the Local Authority considered the immediate impact on local resources, including housing and education, but also received reasonable assurances from the sponsor regarding the sustainability of the resettlement plan over the long term. Croeso Llantwit intends to support a refugee family to integrate into the local community and overcome specific barriers, including providing a pathway to employment, in order to increase its independence.
- 3.2 Taking an integrated approach – The Regional Operations Group is a working group which oversees the operational delivery of the VPRS programme. Representatives from key service providers, including Health, Housing, Education, Social Services, meet quarterly to ensure that customers are able to access services which are appropriate and responsive to their complex needs. Although Croeso Llantwit is a community-led response to resettlement, it is intended that the Authority will continue to support the scheme through its existing partnership arrangements.
- 3.3 Involving the population in decisions – the Community Sponsorship scheme is a community-led response to resettlement, which will allow suitably experienced members of the public to make day-to-day decisions which directly affect the wellbeing outcomes of refugees. While responsibility for accommodation and

integration support is devolved to the sponsors, the Local Authority will still continue to provide advice and support in addition to its direct involvement through statutory services.

- 3.4** Working in a collaborative way – The Authority has worked collaboratively with Croeso Llantwit during the development and evaluation of its sponsorship application. Support and advice was provided by a range of key regional stakeholders, and it is intended that the collaborative relationship will continue once the refugee family has arrived to assist with its long term integration.
- 3.5** Understanding the root causes of issues and preventing them – the Local Authority has gained significant experience through its participation in the VPRS over the past three years. It is well placed, therefore, to understand the operational challenges of supporting a vulnerable refugee family in the community and ensuring that service areas, as well as Croeso Llantwit, are equipped to respond by delivering appropriate, preventative services and interventions.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** Because the Community Sponsors are expected to resource and deliver the family's needs, according to the statement of requirements, it is not expected that a host Local Authority will suffer financial detriment from the scheme. Therefore, the Local Authority cannot claim the Year One tariff funding for sponsorship cases. It is entitled, however, to claim grant funding towards education costs, in line with the LA-led scheme:

Unit costs				
	Adult	Children 5 to 18	Children 3 to 4	Children under 3
Education costs	0	4,500	2,250	0

- 4.2** The appropriate level of funding will be transferred to schools who accept beneficiaries from the relevant age groups. Schools are responsible for recording expenditure for activities such as language support.
- 4.3** Funding for years 2 to 5 may be available to local authorities. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis following a review of the needs of the resettled family and how they will be met. LAs can make a business case to the Home Office to apply for the money, according to the following unit costs:

13-24 Months (Year 2) £5,000	25-36 Months (Year 3) £3,700	37-48 Months (Year 4) £2,300	49-60 Months (Year 5) £1,000
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- 4.4** Authorities are also entitled to claim £850 ESOL funding for each adult refugee arriving through community sponsorship and must ensure that those refugees supported by community sponsors benefit from any money claimed for these refugees.

Employment

- 4.5** A Regional Resettlement Co-ordinator was appointed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council to implement and deliver the Local Authority-led Programme, on a cost-share basis with Cardiff Council. This role is funded by the per-person tariff received to support the costs of resettlement, however, the Authorities receive no additional funding to support the administration costs incurred in participation in the Community Sponsorship scheme.
- 4.6** All resettled families are granted ‘Refugee status’, meaning they will have the right to work and to claim relevant social welfare income.
- 4.7** Community Sponsors are expected to support adult refugees to find suitable employment and to become financially independent. Due to its positioning within the local community and its potential contacts with local business owners, the community sponsorship group should be well placed to achieve a positive employment outcome.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.8** There are no Legal Implications directly linked to this report, however, there is a Collaborative Agreement with Cardiff Council, which was developed in partnership with the Legal Services Department.

5. Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Community Sponsorship Guidance for Prospective Sponsors

Appendix 2 - Community Sponsorship Guidance for Local Authorities



HM Government

Community Sponsorship

Guidance for prospective sponsors



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Introduction

In the last decade, conflicts across the Middle East and North African (MENA) region have left millions of people in need of protection. The UK has played an important role in supporting those in need of protection: through the UK's humanitarian aid effort in Syria, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis; and as one of the world's largest resettlement countries, helping to resettle the most vulnerable refugees. Local authorities and community groups across the UK are helping refugees to feel welcome and able to adjust to a new life in the UK.

Community Sponsorship is a way for local communities, civil society organisations, faith groups and businesses, to be directly involved in helping refugees settle in the UK. Community sponsors provide emotional and practical support to empower resettled families to rebuild their lives and to become self-sufficient members of their new community. Being a sponsor can benefit the local community, through enabling the generosity of local people, and creating new bonds within the community.

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

Further information, including the application form, application guidance notes, guidance for local authorities, and a sample sponsor agreement, is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship>

If you would like to contact the Home Office about the Community Sponsorship Scheme, please email the Community Sponsorship Team at: communitysponsorship@homeoffice.gov.uk

Thank you for your interest in supporting vulnerable people fleeing conflict.



Background

The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) helps refugees affected by the conflict in Syria, focusing on those in the greatest need, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk. We work closely with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify vulnerable refugees in need of resettlement and whose particular needs can only be met in countries like the UK.

The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) aims to protect the most vulnerable children in the MENA region, where UNHCR deem resettlement to be in the best interests of the child. This includes vulnerable children accompanied by their family, such as those at risk of child labour, child marriage and other forms of abuse or exploitation.

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.

Details on the Home Office's resettlement policies and resettlement schemes can be found at: <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resettlement-policy-statement>

What is Community Sponsorship?

Community sponsorship is a ground-breaking development for the resettlement of refugee families in the UK, through the VPRS and VCRS. It enables community groups to become directly involved in supporting the resettlement of refugees fleeing conflict and in need of 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;

- supporting attendance at local Job Centre Plus appointments and assistance with navigating social welfare provision; 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 families resettled in the UK under the VPRS are Syrian. They will primarily be Arabic speakers and are referred by the UNHCR from the region surrounding Syria. Families resettled in the UK under the VCRS are also referred by the UNHCR from the region surrounding Syria and are from a variety of nationalities, such as Iraqi and Sudanese. These families may have Arabic, Assyrian, Farsi, Dari or other languages as their main language. Sponsors are not able to identify or select a specific individual, family or nationality to sponsor, but we will ask you to indicate the type of interpretation support that can be provided on the application form.

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 refugee status and five years' limited leave. During this time, they will have the right to work and to claim relevant social welfare income. After five years, the resettled family will have the option to apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

Community Sponsorship Case Studies

These case studies illustrate the experiences of two different families accepted for resettlement in the UK through Community Sponsorship. The case studies are representative of actual community sponsorship experiences but details have been changed to respect the privacy of resettled families. Every resettled family is different, as is every community sponsorship experience.

Case study 1

A Palestinian family made up of a husband and wife, one adult son and two teenage daughters were resettled in a small market town in the UK from Iraq. As descendants of refugees who were forcibly displaced, the family were barred from returning to their homes, deprived of their citizenship, and were frequently forced to move by militia groups who threatened to kill the father if they did not leave.

The family were elated at the prospect of finding protection in the UK, but naturally faced personal and practical challenges, including adjusting to life in the UK, and dealing with the anxiety of knowing that some of their loved ones remain in Iraq.

The community sponsor group worked hard to manage these challenges by assisting the family to visit their relatives in the UK, helping them with practicalities, such as booking public transport, and explaining how UNHCR's refugee referral process operates. The group supported the family to access English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and a vocational course at college for the son. They are helping the father, who was previously a cook, by exploring options to open a restaurant, which would provide an outlet for both this family and other resettled families in the area with catering skills.

With a history of interrupted schooling, one of the daughters faced struggles in adjusting but after years of having to be escorted to and from school because of a lack of safety, she began walking to school on her own less than three months after arriving in the UK.

After living in fear for so many years, the family feel safe and secure, which is testament to the excellent support of the community sponsor. While there have been challenges, the group has found the experience to be rewarding and plan to sponsor again.

Case study 2

A Syrian family made up of a husband and wife, two adult sons and one younger daughter were resettled in a city in the UK. Whilst living in a camp, the family suffered raids, and witnessed killings and serious injuries. The two sons were considered draft evaders as they were wanted for military conscription, leaving the family living in fear of the prospect of returning to Syria and risking detention, or the forceful conscription of the sons into the Syrian army.

When the family arrived in the UK, they spoke no English, however within a month the sons gained a good understanding of the language. Initially, the father's progress was slower than that of other family members, but all made great improvements and no longer required the constant service of an interpreter after 6 months.

After the first few months, family tensions began to surface which threatened the stability of the family. The community sponsor group decided to speak to the family openly, explaining that the situation was counter-productive to their resettlement. They supported the family by holding mediation sessions, which focused on finding solutions to the causes of their tension, some of which stemmed from the frustration of adjusting to life in the UK, and an identified need to address the trauma family members had experienced in Syria. While there was some stigma associated with accessing mental health support, the sponsor group was able to help gain support for family members who needed it.

After almost a year in the UK, the father found work in a cafe for a short period of time where he made many friends. The eldest son found employment in the same cafe, whilst working towards applying for a place at university. The second oldest son works for a restaurant chain, where he has been identified by senior management as a "rising star" and will be working in their head office while they support him to complete his GCSE examinations. The mother is working with a confectionary company, developing her business skills and English language. As part of the programme, she sells sweets in a market on Sundays. The daughter is doing well in school and has made many friends.

Can Anyone Be a Community Sponsor?

Supporting a vulnerable resettled family is a significant responsibility. The Home Office will approve every sponsor and a separate approval is required for each resettled family group 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 on GOV.UK. The Home Office will assess your suitability to be a community sponsor, according to the criteria set out below.

What Training and Support is Available?

Reset is an organisation funded by the Home Office to provide training and support to prospective and approved community sponsor groups.

Reset provides training for all sponsor groups in the UK, focused on preparing for the arrival of a resettled family and empowering resettled families after their arrival.

Reset works with a network of Regional Coordinators who provide advice, guidance and support to sponsor groups throughout the entire journey of sponsorship, from application through to supporting a resettled family once they have arrived. They share good practice and help groups to work in partnership with relevant organisations.

Find out more about Reset at: www.resetuk.org

Summary of Application Process



Types of Approval

Your group will receive **final approval** and a resettled family will be matched with your group, when you have demonstrated that you have met all of the criteria (see below).

Recognising that some groups may need time to secure the necessary financial resources, and in order to minimise the need to hold housing empty, you may also apply to receive **approval in principle with conditions**. This allows your application to be approved against most of the criteria, giving your group certainty that, if you can meet the financial resources and housing criteria at the end of the process, you will receive **final approval**. Note, however, that if a significant period of time has passed or circumstances have changed, your whole application may be reviewed to determine whether you still meet all of the criteria.

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.

Financial Resources

You must provide evidence that you have thought carefully about how much it will cost to support a resettled family in your community, and that you have access to sufficient financial resources. This should include a forecast budget of anticipated expenditure, taking into account the social welfare income the family might receive and the expected cost of accommodation. The amount community sponsors need to raise can vary significantly depending on the in-kind support they are able to draw on, but the amount can typically range from around £5,000 to £20,000. As part of your application, you must provide evidence that you have available funding of at least £9,000¹.

You do not have to demonstrate that you have £9,000 at the outset of your application. We may approve your application in principle, with the condition that evidence of the secured funds is provided before final approval.

If your organisation **typically has an annual income of £100,000 or more**², you should provide a letter from the chief finance officer for your organisation explaining

¹Recognising the wide range in costs that community sponsors may incur and the varying level of social welfare entitlement, the £9,000 is to demonstrate that you have a minimum level of financial resources to support a resettled family (such as the initial provision of cash on arrival, additional housing costs, funding English language provision, and interpretation costs). The actual costs will vary by sponsor group and it is not a suggested minimum or maximum spend. You are expected to use these funds to support the resettled family. The level of resourcing behind each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

²As evidenced by the previous two years of published accounts 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.

that at least £9,000 has been ring-fenced for the purposes of sponsorship and will be available to use as 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 as necessary, and evidence of the funds in the form of a bank statement.

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, then we may approve your application in principle, with the condition that suitable accommodation is secured before final approval.

The cost of the accommodation must be affordable taking into account the social welfare income the family will receive. If this is not the case, you must demonstrate how you will meet the additional cost.

You are required to liaise with the police to see if they have any objection to the proposed address for the resettled family. Further guidance on this part of the process will be provided by the Home Office.

You are required to provide written confirmation that you have given the local authority the opportunity to inspect your property. Further details on housing requirements can be found in the statement of requirements at **Annex A**.

Community sponsor groups receiving a family on or after 1st November 2018 will be entitled to claim actual void costs, capped at 8 weeks' Local Housing Allowance rate. Community sponsor groups will be able to make a claim after the resettled family has arrived. If you wish to make a claim you can contact the Community Sponsorship Team at the email address on page 4, who will provide details about making a claim.

Local Authority Consent

The majority of local authorities in the UK are resettling refugees, and they also play an important role in community sponsorship.

Local authorities need to consent to each community sponsorship arrangement in their area. This is because local authorities will need to consider the local impacts of additional resettled families, such as on local services and capacity. Local authorities will also want to satisfy themselves that they have no objection to your sponsor group supporting a resettled family.

You must obtain written evidence from the local authority (the format to be determined by the local authority area, which may differ, for example between

unitary and two-tier authorities) that they consent to your group submitting an application to the Home Office. Typically, this consent is provided by the Chief Executive Officer, relevant Director or Councillor with the authority to consent on behalf of the local authority. It is open to the local authority to decide on how consent will be considered locally.

Grounds on which a local authority might object are:

- insufficient capacity to provide certain crucial local services in the proposed housing area (e.g. lack of school places);
- concerns about community tensions in the proposed housing area;
- where they have a strong reason to believe that the community sponsor is not suitable to undertake the resettlement of vulnerable adults and children; or
- 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.

You will need to approach your local authority and ask them to:

- put you in contact with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (see 'Safeguarding' below);
- consider inspecting your proposed accommodation;
- support your engagement with relevant partners, such as the police, Job Centres Prevent, etc.
- support you through the schools admissions process

After your group has been approved as a community sponsor, your local authority must also agree to the allocated family to be resettled (see 'What happens after approval?' below).

More information on the role of local authorities in Community Sponsorship, and the factors that may be considered by local authorities can be found on GOV.UK.

Plan for Resettlement

You must produce a detailed and credible resettlement plan to illustrate how you will deliver effective resettlement support to a resettled family, in accordance with the statement of requirements (at **Annex A**). A template for your resettlement plan is included as part of the application form. The application form and application guidance can be found on GOV.UK.

You must demonstrate your group's capacity and capability to resettle a refugee family. You should provide details of your group's relevant experience, or partnership with people or organisations with relevant experience of working with refugees or supporting vulnerable people.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Policy

You must have robust safeguarding policy and procedures in place.

The policy should cover how you will 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>.

The policy must evidence appropriate reporting and escalation procedures within your organisation to ensure safeguarding concerns are dealt with appropriately.

Written guidance on developing your safeguarding policy can be found in the application guidance on GOV.UK. You are encouraged to speak to your local authority who may wish to support you in developing your safeguarding policy and procedures. You must provide confirmation that you have sent your safeguarding policy to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to give them an opportunity to comment.

Complaints Policy

You must provide a complaints policy, whereby a resettled family can escalate concerns about the support they receive or about individuals providing that support. Written guidance on developing your complaints policy can be found in the application guidance on GOV.UK.

Training

Before you can be matched with a resettled family you will be required to demonstrate that you have completed the relevant training on sponsorship, delivered by Reset. This will help you prepare for welcoming and empowering resettled families.

The programme of training will include areas such as cultural awareness, safeguarding issues when working with resettled families, empowerment and arrival planning.

How Will the Home Office Process Applications for Approval as a Community Sponsor?

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

Checks on Personnel

We will conduct checks on your organisation and the lead sponsor. This includes checks against our records and other third parties such as the police national computer, or its equivalent in Northern Ireland. We may also conduct checks on

individual members of your organisation or the personnel listed in your application form. Where this is the case, you will be notified in writing and the individuals' permission will be sought. 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 or inaccurate information; vocal or active opposition to fundamental UK values (or tolerance of such opposition) including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, universal human rights, gender equality, equality of opportunity, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs, freedom of speech; criminal convictions; immigration offences; or other illegal activity.

It is the responsibility of the lead sponsor to ensure that any individual and collaborating organisations that will be involved in supporting a resettled family are suitable to do so, taking into account any convictions, activities, or opposition to UK values which might call into question an individual's or organisation's appropriateness and suitability to deliver any aspect of community sponsorship. If we consider that any individual or collaborating organisation that plans to be involved in the support of a resettled family is not fit and proper, we may require that you withdraw their involvement or we may refuse your application or revoke your approval.

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 and provides you with an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have. We will invite local authority representatives to attend the meeting as well. 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
- you have undertaken the necessary planning and preparation in readiness for a family arriving.

Successful Application

If you meet all of our criteria we will approve your application. Under certain circumstances, we may approve your application in principle subject to your group fulfilling any outstanding criteria, such as demonstrating that your group has secured suitable and sustainable accommodation, or providing evidence that your group has adequate funding.

If your organisation has not been allocated a resettled family within six months of being approved we will review your application. At this point 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. Information you provide will be taken into account in considering your application, as will any inconsistencies between the information you provide and the information we obtain from our checks. As a result, your application may be refused if you fail to provide accurate information.

You will receive notification should your application be refused. 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.**

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 delivery of their Biometric Residence Permit shortly after 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 five working days of receiving the referral.

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) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation.

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

- not issue anything that identifies the resettled family externally as refugees; and
- get informed consent from the resettled family in relation to any proposed 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.

The Home Office will arrange monitoring meetings after the resettled family has arrived, either by in-person visits or by digital communications at the Home Office's discretion, to support monitoring and evaluation of your sponsorship arrangement. We will provide advance notice of these monitoring meetings, when we will meet with your sponsor group, and separately with the resettled family. Should the resettled family require it, you will be required to provide an interpreter. While we will normally provide advance notice of a visit, there may be circumstances in which an unannounced visit is made.

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 sponsorship agreement, 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

The Borders, Immigration and Citizenship privacy information notice reflects your rights under data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation and lets you know how the Home Office looks after and uses your personal information within the borders, immigration and citizenship system. It also explains how you can request a copy of your information.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-information-use-in-borders-immigration-and-citizenship>

Annex A – Statement of Requirements for Sponsors

Accommodation

Aim: Resettled family has a home in which to settle in the UK, with adequate space and facilities to live in comfort.

Sponsors are required to source suitable and sustainable accommodation, 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 that is affordable and sustainable, taking into account the social welfare income the family will receive;
- have independent access and provide adequate privacy;
- comply with local authority guidance on occupation levels;
- be in a proper state of structural repair, maintained throughout in a good state of repair;
- have 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 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);
- a fire blanket and smoke alarms (including a carbon monoxide alarm where appropriate).

The Sponsor must provide:

- assistance with registration with utility companies and making sure arrangements are made for payment (no pre-pay/card accounts);
- information to resettled persons on the accommodation, health and safety, and an emergency contact point.

Welcome to the UK

Aim: Resettled family members feel welcome in the UK and are able to quickly acclimatise to living in the UK.

Sponsors are required to:

- 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, services, and transport.

Establishing a Life in the UK

Aim: Resettled family are empowered to make a life for themselves and integrate in the UK, through accessing community activities, medical care, language skills, education and employment.

Sponsors are required to:

- ensure resettled family members receive their Biometric Residence Permits within 1 day of receiving them;
- provide assistance with registering children with local schools as soon as possible – commencing prior to arrival and concluding registration no later than 2 weeks after arrival;
- provide interpreting services, as required, for 12 months from 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 8 hours per week for the first 12 months;
- make provisions for formal English language tuition to be supplemented on a regular basis by less formal conversational English;
- monitor progress of each individual and aim for 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 three days 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.

Annex B – Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships – Contact Details

Region	Officer lead	Email	Website
East of England	Gosia Strona	Malgorzata.Strona@eelga.gov.uk	http://smp.eelga.gov.uk/
East Midlands	Sarah Short	Sarah.Short@emcouncils.gov.uk	http://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/East-Midlands-Strategic-Migration-Partnership
London	Nicola Marven	Nicola.Marven@london.gov.uk	https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/helping-resettlement-refugees
North East	Janine Hartley	Janine_Hartley@middlesbrough.gov.uk	www.nesmp.org.uk
North West	Colin Parker Alison Bacon	colin.parker@manchester.gov.uk a.bacon1@manchester.gov.uk	http://northwestsmp.org.uk/
Northern Ireland	-	race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk	www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk
Scotland	Andrew Morrison	andrew@cosla.gov.uk	www.migrationscotland.org.uk
South East	Roy Millard Susan Fawcus (Resettlement Coordinator)	RoyMillard@secouncils.gov.uk sespm@secouncils.gov.uk	www.secouncils.gov.uk/about-us/about-sespm
South West	Kelly-Anne Phillips	kelly-anne.phillips@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	http://www.wmsmp.org.uk
Yorkshire and Humberside	David Brown	admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk	www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk



HM Government

Community Sponsorship Guidance for Local Authorities



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Local Authorities and Community Sponsorship

Community sponsorship enables local community groups to welcome and support refugees directly in their local communities. It was introduced by the Home Office in response to the desire from civil society to play a greater role in refugee resettlement, and with the expectation that the community-led approach will lead to positive integration outcomes for refugees and communities. Establishing positive engagement and collaborative working relationships with local authorities is essential for community groups. This guide for local authorities sets out their role in the community sponsorship process.

“Oxford City Council wants to support Community Sponsorship groups and have been very pleased to have worked closely with the Home Office and a Community Sponsorship group who have been approved and are getting ready to welcome their first family. Community sponsorship groups can bring a range of skills and community opportunities for the refugee family they are supporting. They also provide a great way for the family to make links in their community from day one which can help them settle in quickly and integrate into life in the UK.”

Naomi Winnifrith, Oxford City Council

Refugee Resettlement

An overview

In the last decade, conflicts across the Middle East and North African (MENA) region have left millions in need of protection. The UK, in the shape of local authorities, with the support of community groups and the voluntary sector, has played a vital role in helping those arriving here to feel welcome and able to adjust to a new life in the UK.

The UK has been supporting some of the most vulnerable refugees for many years through the Gateway Protection and Mandate resettlement programmes. In 2014 and in response to the conflict in Syria, the UK launched the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). This was expanded in September 2015 with a pledge by the government to resettle 20,000 individuals by 2020. In 2017, the scheme was opened up to all nationalities affected by the Syrian conflict. The Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) commenced in 2016, with a view to resettling up to 3,000 individuals. VCRS is open to all children deemed to be “at risk”, and their families, within the MENA region.

UNHCR Vulnerability Criteria

At least one member of each resettled household will have met one or more of the following UNHCR criteria:

Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)	Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• survivors of violence or torture, or both• women and girls at risk• refugees with legal or physical protection needs, or both• refugees with medical needs or disabilities• children and adolescents at risk• persons at risk due to sexual orientation/gender identity• refugees with family links	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• child carers• children in detention• children with specific medical needs• children with disabilities• child survivors of (or at risk of) violence, abuse or exploitation including sexual and gender based violence• children at risk of harmful traditional practices (e.g. child marriage and FGM)• children without legal documentation• children at risk of refoulement• children at risk of not attending school• children associated with armed forces or armed groups• children at risk of child labour or already working

Those recognised as refugees by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) are referred to the UK's Resettlement Team, a joint unit between the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Hereafter referred to as simply "the Home Office". Refugees resettled through these schemes are granted five years' refugee leave on arrival in the UK.

Support from local authorities for refugee resettlement has grown significantly over the last few years in response to the real need of those fleeing conflict and persecution. The local authorities involved receive funding which contributes towards the costs of delivering support to refugee families.

More information can be found in the Local Government Association guide for local authorities: <https://www.local.gov.uk/syrian-refugee-resettlement-guide-local-authorities>

Community Sponsorship

A complementary approach

The Community Sponsorship Scheme which was launched in July 2016, complements the resettlement undertaken by local authorities. Under community sponsorship, it is members of the local community that are responsible for finding a property and delivering resettlement support to a resettled family; not local government officers or contracted NGOs. It is the community sponsor's 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 education, and to medical and social services;
- ensuring access to English language tuition;
- supporting attendance at local Job Centre Plus appointments and assistance with navigating social welfare provision; and
- support towards employment and self-sufficiency.

Community sponsors provide integration support for a family for the first year of their time in the UK, and accommodation for the first two years. Full details of the requirements for sponsors are set out in the community sponsorship guidance for prospective sponsors on GOV.UK.

When local groups deliver this kind of support, and liaise with local authorities, often community members with untapped skills and resources are discovered and are able to contribute to successful resettlement using the wide range of skills and experience and goodwill that is present in all our communities. Community sponsor groups will often include trained professionals, such as teachers, medical and social workers, for example. Community sponsors will often use their own networks to encourage landlords previously unknown to local authorities to offer a property at a lower rate. In this way, Community Sponsorship can catalyse communities to participate in supporting vulnerable people, to volunteer and to engage with public policy in new ways.

Bringing communities together around a common cause and mobilising large numbers of people into action can also play a part in facilitating some underrepresented groups to develop stronger links with the council, and each other. It can help to identify local leaders, strengthen local capabilities and encourage stronger communities.

10 Steps to Community Sponsorship

Community groups considering sponsoring a family must apply to the Home Office for approval. This process is managed by the Home Office. The local authority's involvement in this process comes in at **steps 2, 5, 8 and 10**. Groups are encouraged to begin discussions with local authorities early in the application process to help build a positive working relationship. This can help to determine who the appropriate local authority contact will be, what the expected consent process will look like and the likely timescales involved. Early collaboration can be used to set out both local authority and sponsor expectations from the process and secure political and officer support.

To become a community sponsor a community group must:

1	<p><u>Be a registered charity or Community Interest Company (CIC)</u> Groups can secure charitable status in their own right, or work with an existing charity as a “lead sponsor”, such as a local faith group or a national organisation.</p>
2	<p><u>Have secured a suitable self-contained property with a 24-month tenancy</u> The rent should ideally be set at or below the Local Housing Allowance rate to enable the family to afford it with the social welfare income they receive. Where the LHA rate does not meet the full rental cost, groups would need to show that they had considered the available funds and potential expenditure, and had budgeted accordingly. The Home Office will discuss with groups the ongoing affordability and sustainability of the accommodation secured for the family. Groups can seek ‘approval in principle with conditions’ prior to securing a property to help avoid long void periods. In these cases groups will complete all other aspects of the application and their resettlement plan based on the likely area in which they will eventually find a property.</p> <p>Sponsor groups are required to invite the local authority to inspect the property and local authorities may wish to assist the community sponsor by visiting the proposed property to assess its health and safety, i.e. whether or not it complies with local authority guidance on occupation levels, is in a proper state of structural repair, has safe electricity and/or gas supplies, adequate ventilation and lighting, etc. Groups are also asked to contact the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team to ensure it is appropriate to house a refugee family in the area. Local Authorities may also be able to provide assistance with background checks, and will often have local knowledge which may be relevant to assessing the suitability of the proposed housing area.</p>

	<p><i>“Our Environmental Services team inspected the property, as they would for any property on the private rental market. In this case some minor issues were raised. These were passed on to the Letting Agent who will address them before the property is rented out. We (the Local Authority) had translated the Tenancy Agreement, Refuse/Recycling advice and Fire notices into Arabic and copies of these were given to the groups to help support the tenancy.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ceredigion LA on Accommodation</p>
	<p><i>“A key factor for us has been that the Salvation Army is housing the family for two years in a property it owns. Merton London Borough Council does not participate in the VPRS programme for local authorities because of the pressures on social housing, but the community sponsorship scheme has helped us to find a housing solution.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Merton London Borough Council on Accommodation</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<p><u>Be able to prove that they have funds available</u> This is a minimum of £9000 to support a resettled family. The £9,000 is to demonstrate that groups have a minimum level of financial resources to support a resettled family (such as the initial provision of cash on arrival, additional housing costs, funding English language provision, and interpretation costs). The actual costs will vary by sponsor group and it is not a suggested minimum or maximum spend. The level of resourcing behind each application will be considered by the Home Office on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<p><u>Put together a proposal of how they will support a refugee family</u> This includes completing a comprehensive application form including a resettlement plan. The group must also draw up a safeguarding policy ensuring that appropriate reporting and escalation procedures, and vetting of volunteers, are in place. Sponsor groups are required to invite the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) to comment on their safeguarding policy and the local authority may wish to facilitate engagement between the group and the LSCB to enable this to happen.</p> <p><i>“The community group held an initial meeting with us (the local authority) to run through their plans. We gave them feedback, made some suggestions and also advised the group on their safeguarding policy and procedures. We drew up a report that assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the plan and carried out an Integrated Impact Assessment. The resulting paper was then taken to Scrutiny Committee with a request to recommend that Cabinet approve the group’s application to undertake Community Sponsorship of refugees in Ceredigion.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ceredigion LA on Resettlement Plans</p>

5	<p>Have consent from the local authority --to submit an application to the Home Office. (This may include both the upper and lower tier authorities in two tier areas). Further information on this step can be found below on page 10.</p> <p><i>“We supported the Salvation Army’s application to the government every step of the way. I have been really impressed by their commitment and willingness to anticipate the family’s needs.”</i></p> <p>Yvette Stanley, Merton London Borough Council</p>
6	<p><u>Apply to the Home Office formally, and have their application considered.</u> As part of this process, the Home Office will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify the group’s charitable status • Perform a series of security checks on the lead sponsor – where it is considered appropriate the Home Office may also conduct checks on individual members of the group • Ensure that the group has in place a robust and organised structure with clear lines of accountability, i.e. in terms of decision-making, safeguarding the family • Consider the organisation’s suitable experience • See evidence that housing is available for a minimum of two years • Examine the quality and content of the group’s resettlement plan which explains how they will deliver support and integration • Be satisfied that the group has a safeguarding policy in place • See evidence that the group has met the financial criteria • Conduct a pre-approval visit to question the prospective sponsor group on their application (note that the local authority is invited to attend) • Confirm that representatives of the group have attended the relevant Community Sponsorship training. • Be satisfied that appropriate English language tuition and interpreters will be available • Sign a legally-binding Sponsor Agreement with the community group to deliver resettlement as a community sponsor.
7	<p>If approved, <u>receive details of a potential family from the Home Office</u>, to be jointly considered by the community sponsor and the local authority (see next step).</p>
8	<p><u>Accept the family.</u> The local authority is consulted for their agreement to accept the family for resettlement based on whether the proposed family’s needs can be met in the local authority area. Depending on each individual case, individuals from key statutory agencies can be called on to inform this decision. The local authority is asked to accept each and every family. This decision cannot be made by the community sponsor alone.</p>

9	Review and confirm acceptance of the family to the Home Office.
10	The community sponsor prepares to welcome the resettled family at the airport and take them to their new home. The Home Office will arrange monitoring meetings after the resettled family has arrived, either by in-person visits or by digital communications at the Home Office's discretion, to support monitoring and evaluation of the sponsorship arrangement. The local authority will be invited to attend.

Local Authority Involvement

Where do you come in?

The responsibility for assessing and approving applications from community groups and managing the community sponsorship process lies with the Home Office.

However, local authorities have an important role to play in the process, and local authority consent is required for each community sponsorship arrangement in their area – at two stages, as outlined above and set out in more detail below. This is to allow local authorities to consider the local impacts of additional resettled families, such as on local services and capacity, and to give local authorities a mechanism by which to raise any objections they might have to the sponsor group proposing to support a resettled family.

In summary, local authorities can support community groups by:

- Putting groups in contact with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to advise on the group's safeguarding policy;
- Arranging an inspection of the proposed accommodation;
- Supporting engagement of relevant partners in line with the sponsor's resettlement plan, e.g. police, Job Centres, Prevent etc;
- Supporting groups through schools admissions process;
- Providing local authority consent that the group can operate as a community sponsor in the area (Local Authority Consent 1 – see below), and
- After approval of the group by the Home Office, agree that the group can accept the refugee family (Local Authority Consent 2 – see below).

"Sutton Council was delighted to help our partners from Sutton Deanery in preparing for and receiving a family from Syria. The application process was a little tricky for a small community group to navigate alone and our officers were able to help provide information and advice as part of that. We also assisted in setting up a robust safeguarding arrangement, including access to training, and suggestions of contacts in partner organisations that could help.

Ultimately the Council is very grateful to Sutton Deanery as the group that drove this forward and our support was minimal in comparison to their efforts, however it was good to note that our Head of Commissioning & Corporate Improvement was on hand to fix a broken door lock when visiting the new property rather than simply manage bureaucratic process!"

Councillor Ruth Dombey, Leader of Sutton Council

Local Authority Consent 1: The Community Group

The prospective sponsor must obtain written evidence from the local authority (the format to be determined by the local authority area e.g. may differ between unitary and two- tier authorities) that they consent to the approval of the application. Typically, this consent is provided by the Chief Executive Officer, Director or Councillor with the authority to consent on behalf of the local authority. It is open to the local authority to decide on how consent will be considered locally.

- Grounds on which a local authority might object are:
- insufficient capacity to provide certain crucial local services in the proposed housing area (e.g. lack of school places);
- concerns about community tensions in the proposed housing area;
- where they have a strong reason to believe that the community sponsor is not suitable to undertake the resettlement of vulnerable adults and children; or
- another appropriate reason.

Local Authority Consent 2: The Refugee Family

Once approved, the Home Office will provide the local authority and the sponsoring group with case and medical notes about a proposed family via the secure IT system MOVEit. Where the sponsorship arrangement is in a council area where there are no other resettled refugees, the council will need to contact the Home Office to be given access to MOVEit. This responsibility can fall to the county council or the district council and is for the local authorities to decide for their area.

Before the sponsorship can proceed, the local authority must agree to accept the proposed refugee family, as must the sponsoring group. Liaison with key partners may be necessary to make an assessment of whether the family's needs can be met.

- Grounds on which a local authority might object to a proposed refugee family are:
- a medical condition that requires specific treatment that is not available within a reasonable distance;
- lack of school places within a reasonable distance;
- other specific needs that cannot reasonably be met in the local area.

The local authority will also want to take into consideration any interventions that the sponsoring group themselves might be able to put in place.

The Sponsor Arrangement

The first two years

Community Sponsors are responsible for supporting a refugee family for a minimum period of 12 months after their arrival in the UK, and providing accommodation for a minimum period of 24 months.

“The Salvation Army has taken the lead in co-ordinating support for the family; drawing on resources within its own congregation [...] they have also followed up on all the links that we have made for them to ensure support is there for the family from day one.”

Merton London Borough Council

Sponsorship placements are currently reviewed by the Home Office at regular intervals after arrival through monitoring meetings. The local authority will be invited to attend these meetings.

Towards the end of the first year, the Home Office discusses with the sponsor and the local authority about ongoing support needs of the family, and, if there are ongoing support needs, how these will be met from 12 months onwards.

If the sponsoring group end their support after one year they must have a suitable transition plan for the family at the 12-month point and the local authority may need to liaise with the sponsoring group at the end of 12 months to consider if the family requires additional support. Direct funding is available for local authorities to claim for years 2-5, determined on a case-by-case basis.

Funding may also be available during the first year in the event that new support needs arise which cannot be met by the sponsoring group, or the sponsoring group is unable to deliver adequate support, or the sponsorship arrangement breaks down (also see below).

How does funding work?

Neither community sponsors nor local authorities receive year one tariff funding for community sponsorship cases. The sponsoring group takes full responsibility for resourcing and delivering the family's needs according to a statement of requirements, similar to that for local authorities.

Local authorities will be entitled to claim funding in year one towards education costs in line with council-led resettlement schemes. This amounts to £4,500 for children aged 5 to 18 and £2,250 for children aged 3 to 4. Authorities are also entitled to claim £850 ESOL funding for each adult refugee arriving through community sponsorship and must ensure that those refugees supported by community sponsors benefit from any money claimed for these refugees.

Funding for years 2 to 5 may be available to local authorities. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis following a review of the needs of the resettled family and how they will be met. Local authorities can make a business case to the Home Office to apply for the money. Local authorities should contact the Community Sponsorship Team for more information. See below for contact details.

Community sponsor groups receiving a family on or after 1st November 2018 will be entitled to claim actual void costs, capped at 8 weeks' Local Housing Allowance rate. Community sponsor groups will be able to make a claim direct with the Home Office after the resettled family has arrived. The payment of void costs for sponsor groups will extend to the lifetime of the current Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes up to 2020.

What about housing after 2 years?

Housing is to be provided by sponsors for a minimum of two years. Sponsors are expected to work with the family to support understanding of social welfare, banking, budgeting, house contracts and rents and to secure a smooth transition to sustainable accommodation if required. A meeting between the sponsoring group and local authority in advance would allow housing issues and options to be discussed. In the unlikely event that a family becomes homeless the local authority would be expected to consider housing for the family in accordance with their normal procedures.

How will the local authority and group work together to communicate and mitigate these issues?

"In 2016, it was clear that there was significant interest in Community Sponsorship Schemes in Pembrokeshire and when Cabinet pledged support to the SVPRS programme in November 2016, it directed a close working relationship with the various Croeso groups to develop this. Representatives from Croeso Arberth and Croeso Abergwaun were invited to attend the multi-agency meeting process which looked at the implementation of the programme from a strategic perspective but which also prepared the way for the arrival of the first LA family. This in turn helped the Community Sponsorship groups prepare for their first families. It was agreed that the matching panel process would be the same for LA and community sponsored families with a coordinator of the Croeso groups attending each panel.

By working closely together, the Local Authority and Croeso groups are able to share what has worked with their families, what hasn't gone so well, and how things can be improved. They have been able to share the ESOL provision and interpreter support. The success of the project has been demonstrated by the mutual support between the Croeso groups and the LA."

Pembrokeshire Case Study

Sponsorship Breakdown

What happens in the case of sponsorship breakdown?

A sponsorship arrangement could breakdown because the resettled family chooses to leave the community sponsorship arrangement and live elsewhere. This scenario is the same for the wider resettlement scheme – where in such cases, the family will no longer benefit from the additional support provided under the Programme.

In the event that sponsorship breakdown occurs due to the sponsor being unable to deliver their commitments, the care for the resettled family would fall to the local authority. Our priority would be to continue support to the family and the Home Office would support the local authority with this transition.

The combination of a robust approval process, sponsor induction, and ongoing monitoring of sponsors all mitigates the risk of sponsorship breakdown. Nevertheless, although we consider the risk to be very low, there will inevitably be rare occurrences of sponsorship breakdown.

What about costs falling to Local Authorities?

In the event that a sponsorship arrangement breaks down, an appropriate level of funding will be made available to the local authority, within the existing tariff structure, to provide the necessary support to the resettled family. It is intended that the local authority will not suffer financially.

What happens when sponsorship breaks down in an LA area which does not support the main scheme and therefore doesn't have the necessary skills/experience?

Local authorities will have consented to each community sponsorship arrangement in their area. Those local authorities who do not support the wider resettlement scheme and may not have the necessary skills or experience to support the resettled family, will want to consider how to mitigate this risk in advance, such as identifying another local authority, or a local organisation, with relevant expertise to whom they could turn for support if required. In some cases, it may be possible for another community sponsor group to take over. If this happens sponsors will be expected to ensure a smooth transition to local authority support or another community sponsor in the event of breakdown.

What Next?

Where to go for more information

If you have not already done so, please visit the Community Sponsorship page at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship> where guidance for prospective sponsors, an application form, application guidance notes and a sample sponsor agreement can be found.

If you would like to contact the Home Office about the Community Sponsorship Scheme, please email: communitysponsorship@homeoffice.gov.uk

The Home Office team are ready to provide you with further information and respond to any questions that you may have about the Scheme. They are also willing to attend local authority meetings to provide further information about sponsorship.

Regional leads on refugee resettlement can give advice and connect local authorities with other councils who have been through the process.

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