

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 11 January 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Approval to consent to a Community Sponsorship Application
Purpose of Report:	To request Cabinet 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
Executive Summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 2016, the Community Sponsorship Scheme was launched, as a strand of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), to enable local communities to become directly involved in providing accommodation and support to refugees of the Syrian civil war. This scheme works in parallel to Local Authority resettlement work. • Costs associated with accommodation and support are met entirely by the sponsor, however, Local Authorities can claim a per-child tariff in the first year of arrival to support the cost of providing education. • Croeso Cowbridge has requested formal consent from the Vale of Glamorgan Council to its application to become a Sponsor, which would enable it to accommodate and support one refugee family in the town, and Cabinet consent is therefore being sought. • The Vale of Glamorgan Council has consented to two previous community sponsorship applications, from Croeso Penarth and Croeso Llantwit, which have both subsequently received full Home Office approval. 	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves “Croeso Cowbridge” application to the Home Office to become a Community Sponsor.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. Under Home Office guidance, see Appendix 1, the Community Sponsor (“the Sponsor”) is required to obtain written consent from the Local Authority before it is permitted to apply to the Home Office for approval. Croeso Cowbridge has met the standard required by the Local Authority to sponsor a refugee family, therefore it is appropriate to provide the necessary consent.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Vale of Glamorgan Council has supported the resettlement of refugees from the Syrian conflict since June 2016, in partnership with Cardiff Council, under the Home Office’s Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).
- 1.2 On 20th May 2019, the Managing Director used his Emergency Powers to extend the Authority’s regional participation for the remaining lifespan of the VPRS.
- 1.3 On 23rd March 2020, Cabinet agreed to participate in the new UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) (Cabinet Minute C288 refers), for the first year of the scheme, which aims to resettle up to 5,000 refugees each year.
- 1.4 The UKRS was intended to succeed the VPRS upon its natural expiry in April 2020. However, as a result of the impact on international travel as a consequence of the pandemic, no refugees have been resettled since March 2020, resulting in the Home Office being unable to fulfil its original pledge. Up until March 2020, 19,768 refugees had safely arrived in the UK through this flagship scheme.
- 1.5 In November 2020, the Home Office confirmed the resumption of resettlement operations and signalled its intention to complete the VPRS during early 2021, by matching eligible refugees to existing offers from both Local Authorities and approved Community Sponsors. As a result of this announcement, it is estimated the remaining 232 refugees will arrive in the UK before March 2021.
- 1.6 Sadly, the pandemic has further intensified the suffering of thousands of people trapped in appalling conditions (in countries which border Syria), many of whom have “irregular status” and therefore lack fundamental access to shelter, education and health care. International resettlement pathways, such as the VPRS, remain the only durable solution for those who cannot safely remain in their host country.

- 1.7** Community Sponsors have used the standstill in operations to refine their resettlement plans and prepare to work in tandem with Local Authorities to complete the VPRS.
- 1.8** The support available to prospective Sponsors and Local Authorities has improved significantly since the community-led scheme was first introduced. Pre- and post-resettlement training and support is now provided by Reset UK, which is funded by the Home Office to provide a range of specialist services to ensure an integrated approach to resettling sponsored refugees.
- 1.9** The resetuk.org website provides guidance for authorities to navigate the consent process and a useful toolkit to support decision making. In order to provide consent, however, Local Authorities must ultimately decide if each resettlement plan provides reasonable assurances the Sponsor will be able to meet the obligations set out in the Statement of Requirements at Appendix 2.
- 1.10** In addition to its expertise in resettlement work, the Vale of Glamorgan Council has participated in the evaluation of four successful sponsorship proposals in the region, to-date and is, therefore, fully cognisant of the critical components of a successful application and, more importantly, the skills necessary to deliver holistic integration support post-arrival.
- 1.11** Cabinet previously consented to Croeso Penarth in May 2018 (Cabinet Minute C318 refers) and to Croeso Llantwit in September 2019 (Cabinet Minute C88 refers). While the latter waits for the resettlement pathways to re-open, Croeso Penarth has successfully supported the integration of a refugee family since September 2018.
- 1.12** Despite the social and economic challenges of 2020, public interest in community sponsorship has continued to grow in Wales. Ten families are already being supported in community settings across the nation, including two in the Cardiff and Vale region, excluding new arrivals.
- 1.13** The Croeso Cowbridge application, therefore, benefits from practical examples which demonstrate it will respond to a range of day-to-day challenges, which have already been experienced by other Sponsors. For example, the Sponsor has provided evidence to support the provision of English language tuition (ESOL); community integration; and employment support within a rural setting.
- 1.14** Sponsors can only apply to the Home Office for ‘approval’, once written consent has been provided by the host Local Authority. The Home Office is responsible for subsequently assessing each application on a case-by-case basis, and separate approval is required for each family sponsored.
- 1.15** Sponsors can apply for ‘approval in principle’ if they are not immediately able to satisfy all the mandatory requirements. In doing so, sponsors gain additional time to raise the necessary funding (£4,500 per adult) and to secure suitable

accommodation. Once identified, Local Authorities are invited to inspect the property to ensure it complies with local housing standards, before the sponsor can retrospectively apply to the Home Office for 'final approval'.

- 1.16** Croeso Cowbridge will apply for 'approval in principle' and the Local Authority is therefore requested to consent, subject to the subsequent approval of its accommodation.
- 1.17** During the development of its resettlement application, core members of the Croeso Cowbridge group engaged openly with the Regional Resettlement Co-ordinator and sought advice, particularly during the initial planning phase.
- 1.18** 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.
- 1.19** The sponsorship proposal was evaluated by stakeholders from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, which considered a range of factors, including capacity in the local housing market; school capacity; community cohesion; English 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.
- 1.20** A local stakeholder panel met with core members on the 30th July 2020, 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.
- 1.21** Social Services worked with the group to ensure the Safeguarding Policy, submitted as part of the application, were satisfactory and compliant with Local Authority standards.
- 1.22** It is the shared opinion of stakeholders (Housing, Education and Social Services), that Croeso Cowbridge has fully considered the implications of community sponsorship and has put forward an application which offers reasonable assurances that a successful resettlement outcome will be achieved.
- 1.23** In consideration of the evaluation conducted by local stakeholders, Members are requested to approve the recommendation to consent to the application from Croeso Cowbridge.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Home Office's announcement regarding the resumption of resettlement operations (para 1.5) is welcomed by all participants within the flagship scheme,

which comprises one of the only safe and regular routes into the UK for people seeking sanctuary. Despite its earlier commitment to implement the UKRS immediately following completion of the VPRS, the Home Office announced it will conduct a Ministerial review of Resettlement (January 2021) prior to commencement of the new scheme.

- 2.2** The Local Authority has been informed that the Home Office will complete the VPRS using existing pledges and, consequently, approved Sponsors, which have not already offered accommodation, are unlikely to receive a family under this scheme. The position is uncertain for Sponsors which have yet to be approved, including Croeso Cowbridge, therefore, the Home Office has been petitioned to declare its long-term position on refugee resettlement. By consenting to this application, the Vale of Glamorgan Council can demonstrate its support for the community organisation and the continuation of this lifeline for people in need of our protection.
- 2.3** For Community Sponsorship, whilst accommodation and support are not provided by the Local Authority, there are capacity and resource implications for local schools as refugee households commonly contain three or more children. In mitigation, the Authority will use up-to-date admissions information to ensure places are available in primary and secondary year groups before agreeing to accept a specific case referral. Additional funding may also be claimed to support any additional costs.
- 2.4** In the event of a breakdown of a sponsorship arrangement, such that a Sponsor becomes unable to deliver its obligations, care of the resettled family would fall to the host Local Authority. The new Local Authority Guidance, developed by the Home Office and ResetUK, states that *“ In the very unlikely event of a breakdown in the relationship between the welcomed family and the Group, or ongoing support needs after the end of the formal sponsor agreement, the Local Authority may take on a leadership role in the resettlement of the family with funding made available to you from the Home Office”*.
- 2.5** In the event a family becomes homeless the local authority would be under a duty to consider housing for the family. The Local Authority is satisfied the sponsors will take all reasonable steps to prevent such an occurrence including, for example, using its own resources to support the cost of rented accommodation.
- 2.6** The Local Authority, therefore, has sought to gain assurances that Croeso Cowbridge is capable of discharging its responsibilities, despite the challenges. Furthermore, post-resettlement support from ResetUK will assist in ensuring Croeso Cowbridge remains cohesive and able to meet the needs of the family over the medium term.

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 Cowbridge 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 Local Authority collaborates with strategic, regional stakeholders to ensure an integrated approach to the delivery of the VPRS programme. Partnership working with representatives from key service providers, including the Integration Support Provider; Health; Housing; Education; and Social Services, ensures that customers can access services which are appropriate and responsive to their needs. It is intended the Authority will continue to support the Sponsor through these partnership arrangements to ensure positive integration outcomes are achieved.
- 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 continue to provide advice and support in addition to provision of statutory services.
- 3.4** Working in a collaborative way – The Authority has worked collaboratively with Croeso Cowbridge during the development and evaluation of its sponsorship proposal, and it is intended that the collaborative relationship will continue once the refugee family has arrived to promote 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 four years. It is well placed, therefore, to understand the operational challenges of supporting vulnerable refugee families in the community and ensuring that service areas, as well as Croeso Cowbridge, are equipped to respond by delivering appropriate, preventative services and interventions.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** It is not anticipated that a host Local Authority will incur any financial detriment from hosting a sponsorship scheme. Although the Local Authority cannot claim tariff funding for sponsorship cases, it is entitled, however, to claim grant funding

to support education costs, in line with the LA-led scheme, according to the following unit costs:

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

The appropriate level of funding will be transferred to schools which accept children from the relevant age groups.

- 4.2** Where required, funding for years 2 to 5 may be available to local authorities, according to the following unit costs, determined on a case-by-case basis.

13-24 Months (Year 2)	25-36 Months (Year 3)	37-48 Months (Year 4)	49-60 Months (Year 5)
£5,000	£3,700	£2,300	£1,000

Employment

- 4.3** All resettled families are granted 'Refugee status', meaning they will have the right to work and to claim relevant welfare benefits.
- 4.4** 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 connections with local businesses, the community sponsorship group is well placed to achieve a positive employment outcome.
- 4.5** There are no additional employment implications.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.6** 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

None.



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?

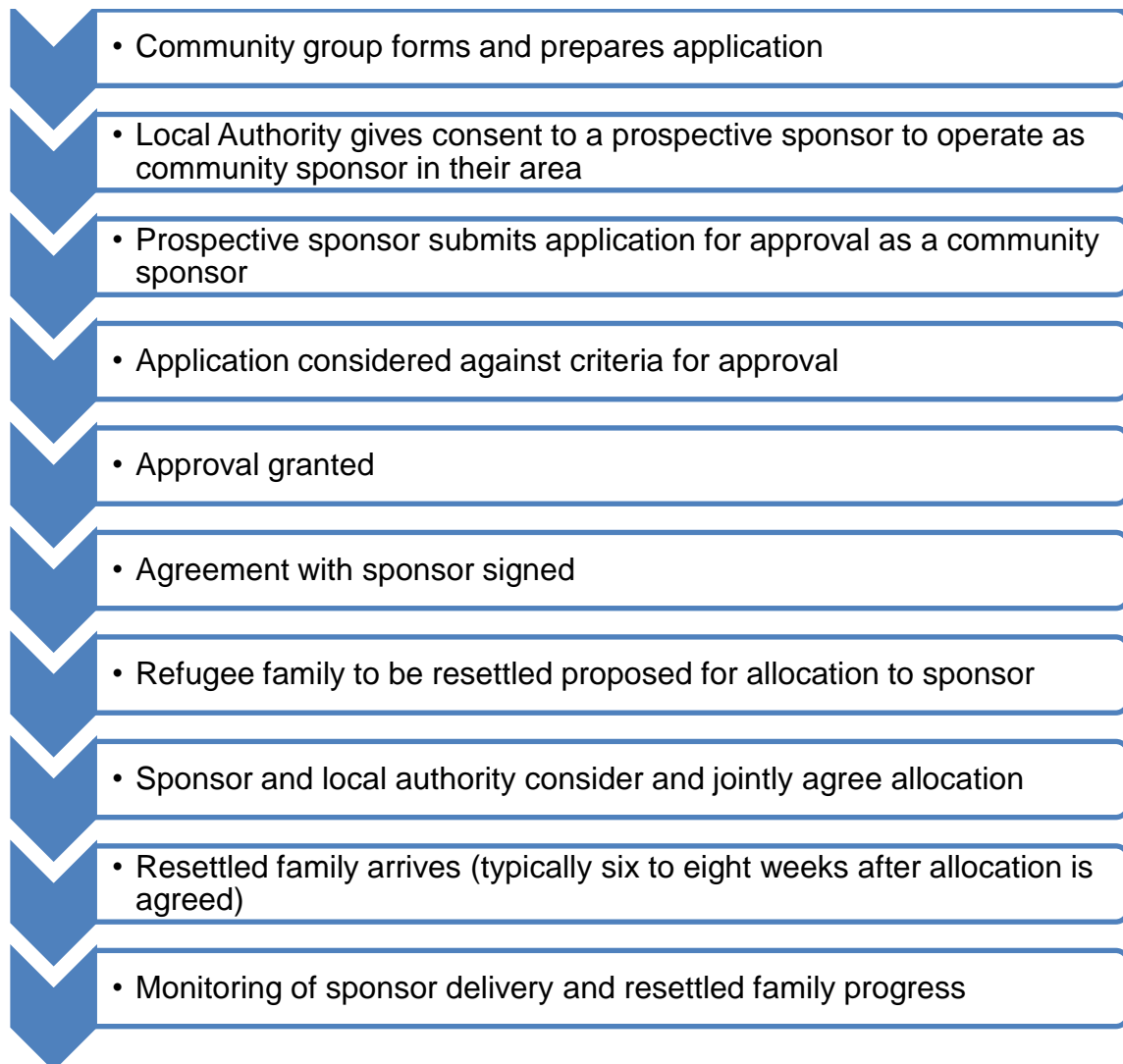
Reset is an organisation funded by the Home Office to provide training and support to prospective and approved community sponsor groups.

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

Appendix Two – 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.

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