Community Sponsorship Guide

"May every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every sanctuary of Europe, take in one family."

Pope Francis

caritas
social action network

Caritas
Diocese of Salford

Community Sponsorship Guide
Introduction

Goal: Become a sponsor and support a refugee family

Becoming a community sponsor to a refugee family is a big responsibility, but is also so rewarding! While it may seem daunting, the process is absolutely doable. It just takes a little courage, effort and good-will.

This guide is here to help you prepare.
Your group will need to show that you can meet certain criteria before you can welcome a family. Each section of this guide corresponds to one of these criteria, explains why it's valuable, and provides useful strategies and resources if you get stuck. Use as much or as little of the guide as you need.

Don't forget, you're not alone!
Sponsorship is a whole community effort. Recruit community members and partner with local groups to create a supportive and welcoming network for a family. We are also available to answer questions if you need a little help. A list of helpful contacts is provided on the back of this guide.

Criteria

✓ **Organisation Status** 3
Your group is, or is partnered with, a registered charity or community interest company (CIC).

✓ **Experience** 3
Your lead sponsor, support personnel, and/or partner organisations have relevant experience supporting refugees or other groups of vulnerable people.

✓ **Financial Commitment** 5
Your group has thought carefully about what it will cost to support a resettled family and ring-fenced at least £9,000 (£4,500 per adult), evidenced with a letter (and a bank statement if necessary) from your chief financial officer.

✓ **Housing** 7
Your group has sourced accommodation for a minimum of two years and has had this approved by the Police and the Local Authority. *The Home Office can accept an application before housing is finalised, but can only finally approve it once housing is secured.*

✓ **ESOL & Interpreters** 9
Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes or teacher arranged for a minimum of 10 hours per week per adult for the first 12 weeks, followed by a minimum of 5 hours per week. Interpreters available for 12 months as required.

✓ **Safeguarding** 11
Your group has a concise, easy to understand safeguarding policy and network of contacts that ensures the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

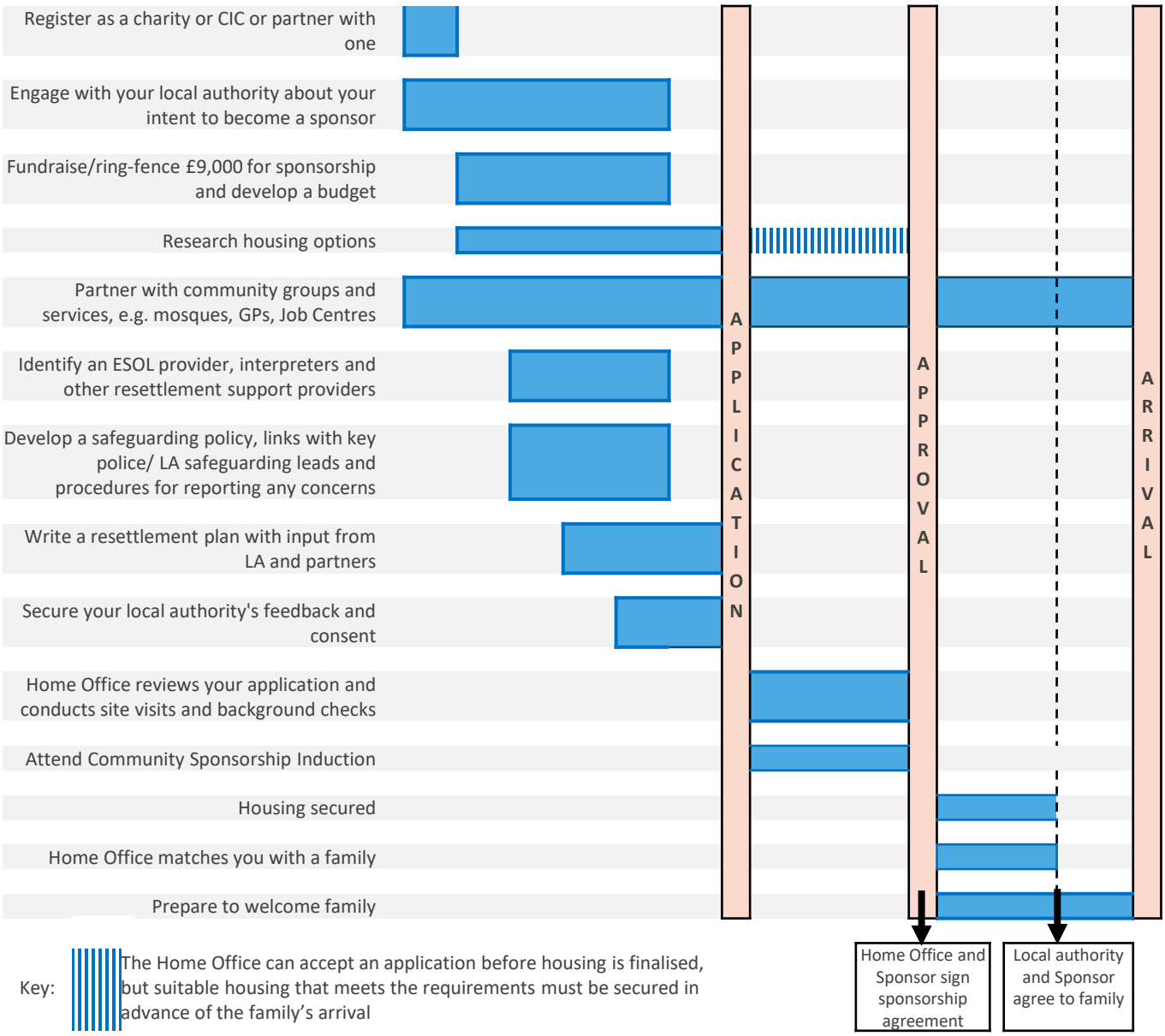
✓ **Resettlement Plan** 13
Your group has completed a thorough resettlement plan that explains how you will deliver services for integration and support.

✓ **Local Authority Consent** 15
Your group has obtained written evidence from the local authority that they consent to the approval of your application.

Resources

Community Sponsorship Preparatory Steps:
The below chart gives an indication of the order in which you might complete your application.

Each group starts their sponsorship journey with a different level of experience, so it is difficult to estimate how long it will take to complete the application process. Based on current experiences, it has taken groups approximately 6 months from forming to receiving an application decision. The organisations listed on the back of this guide can support you with developing your application. Following the approval of an application the Home Office will agree a realistic timeline for the arrival of the family with the community sponsor. The aim will always be to resettle a family as quickly as possible but there are a range of factors that influence the process to find, match and resettle a suitable family.



- **Application Checklist:** When you're ready, you will need to **submit a completed application to** communitysponsorship@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk **with the following attachments:**

  - ❑ A letter from your organisation's chief financial officer (or equivalent) and additional evidence of funds as necessary
  - ❑ Documentation of suitability of accommodation[+]
  - ❑ A safeguarding policy
  - ❑ A resettlement plan *(including a budget and list of organisations/ individuals providing support)*
  - ❑ A letter of consent from appropriate local authority

  +Letter from LA private sector housing team confirming they have inspected the property, that it complies with regulations, and confirmation from the police that they have no concerns with the address being used to house a resettled family

Community Sponsorship Guide
Organisation & Experience

Goal: Prepare your group to become a sponsor

Community sponsorship is voluntary and open to all groups, **including charities, faith groups, and businesses.** Resettling a family is a significant responsibility so your group must demonstrate it has an appropriate structure and relevant experience supporting vulnerable people like asylum seekers or the homeless. Don't worry if you don't have this, you can partner with organisations and individuals in your community with experience (e.g. finance, education, healthcare) and bring them together to support resettled families.

To meet the organisation and experience criteria, your organisation *or its partners* will need:

- ❑ Charity or Community Interest Company (CIC) status
- ❑ A lead sponsor
- ❑ Support personnel
- ❑ Experience supporting vulnerable people

"A lot of effort went into [becoming a charity] those initial 6 months, but one year later, CHARIS is certainly seeing the benefits."

CHARIS

Meeting the criteria

✓ **Have or obtain charity or CIC status.**
If your organisation does not have charity or CIC status, consider the following options:

- **Partnering with an existing charity or CIC.** The partner must be prepared to take full responsibility for the sponsorship arrangement and ensure clear lines of accountability with your organisation;
- **Creating a new charity;**
- **Creating a new CIC.** A CIC is a social enterprise that wants to use its profits and assets for the public good. CICs are intended to be easy to set up, with all the flexibility and certainty of the company form, but with some special features to ensure they are working for the benefit of the community.

✓ **Identify a lead sponsor to be responsible for the sponsorship arrangement.**
A lead sponsor is typically a senior member within your organisation, i.e. a member of the board of the charity or CIC, a Chief Executive, or equivalent.

✓ **Identify support personnel and their roles in the sponsorship arrangement.**

✓ **Demonstrate that your group or your partners have experience supporting vulnerable people.**
Relevant previous experience might include:

- Resettling refugees through your local authority;
- Working with asylum seekers or the homeless;
- Supporting victims of trafficking or domestic violence.

✓ **Develop partnerships to fill gaps in experience and provide comprehensive support to a family.**
You don't have to do it alone! Sponsorship is a community endeavour. Reach out to groups in your community that may have experience supporting vulnerable people. **Refugee organisations, religious groups, schools, local police safer neighbourhood teams and your local authority may be able to provide additional support.** As with all partnerships, ensure each member has a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability.

"Initially we were offered the opportunity to be taken under the umbrella of an existing charity. Eventually we decided to become a charity in our own right which simplified everything and has the added bonus that donations can be gift-aided. The Charity Commission was very helpful. The entire process took approx 8 weeks."

Bude Refugee Support Group on Becoming a Charity

"CHARIS became a charity themselves rather than work underneath another charitable umbrella organisation, enabling it to build a sustainable foundation and infrastructure to support the resettlement of refugee families…To approach this CHARIS set up a board of Trustees and a management team and methodically worked through all the requirements needed to set up a charity. CHARIS used experts and experience from those in its own organisation and supporters that have worked on Charity boards and within charitable organisations before to help through some of the more challenging tasks. The Charities Commission was also a very helpful source of information and advice. Taking in total about 6 months this was all essentially done before CHARIS started work in earnest in their sponsorship application.

The benefits of this process have been that CHARIS now has a robust and working governance and organisational model, all the policies and processes it needs to function and a structure that can effectively deliver the resettlement plans, as well as raise funding and generate new supporters."

CHARIS on Becoming a Charity

"As a group of churches in Worthing we already had partnerships with the local voluntary sector, local government and businesses. So we convened meetings with the groups we already knew to outline our plans and invite offers of support. We then hosted a public launch during which we also invited offers of support. The offers of support that followed filled in the gaps we hadn't been able to provide ourselves which enabled us to complete the Community Sponsorship application."

Worthing4Refugees on Partnering with Others

Resources

- Information on how to set up and register a charity is available at: **www.gov.uk/setting-up-charity/register-your-charity**.
- Information on how to set up and register a CIC at: **www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-regulator-of-community-interest-companies**

Community Sponsorship Guide
Financial Commitment

Goal: Demonstrate financial resources

The resettled family will receive state benefits *(they will be able to take up work if able)*, but your group needs to have **sufficient financial resources** to help your family integrate. This may cover items such as interpreting services, public transport, furnishings, £200 for each family member on arrival, interim funding while benefits claims are processed and any additional money that may required to meet expenditure not covered by the benefits your family receive.

To meet the financial criteria, your group will need:

- ❑ A budget
- ❑ At least £9,000*
- ❑ Evidence from your chief financial officer that £9,000 has been ring-fenced for sponsorship

**The £9,000 requirement is for a typical 2-adult family and is based on £4,500 per adult. No figure is applied to children because they will receive the majority of their support through the education system. The Home Office do not require you to spend this amount. It just assures them that your group has sufficient funds to respond to any immediate needs.*

Meeting the Criteria

✓ **Determine how much sponsorship will cost in your community.**
Estimate what it will take your group to support a family in your community and focus on achieving that target. Don't fixate on the £9,000; although you need to have this money available, depending on the circumstances of your sponsorship, you may need to actually spend more or less. You should estimate the level of benefits your family will receive: your local Job Centre may be able to assist with this.

✓ **Prepare an initial budget.**
Start by assigning an estimated cost to each section of your resettlement plan and how your group will provide for each cost. Some elements can be provided at no cost to your group through public services, volunteers, or donations, while others can be covered by the family's income through benefits. Revise as you receive more information and keep a record of available funds and potential expenditure.

"A key aspect of raising money is sharing the vision of what we are trying to do…Word of mouth then gets round and donations start to be received."

Worthing4Refugees

✓ **Fundraise.**
Community sponsorship is a community-led initiative, so appeal to your community for support in generating funds. Start by making the community aware of what you are planning and why it is important. Set a target and put a plan in place to achieve it. Past sponsors have successfully used a mix of appeals for charitable donations, fundraising activities and sponsorship from local businesses.

✓ **Provide evidence from your chief financial officer ring-fencing £9,000 for sponsorship.**
If your organisation's typical annual income is less than £100,000, you should also provide evidence of the funds in the **form of a bank statement.**

"We have held street collections, sold cakes at fetes, been carol singing, made some beach-art during refugee week last June and have given talks to local groups. Once we felt we had enough local support we launched our 'sponsorship deal'. We asked people to help us bring 2 families to be resettled here in Bude by pledging just £5 a month for 20 months,(£100 in total). By getting 300 people on board we could raise £30,000. We wrote to churches, local groups and businesses & asked them to donate. We have been overwhelmed by the support.- having raised 2/3 of the money in 4 months."

Bude Refugee Support Group on Fundraising

"We have asked local churches to take offerings for the project. We have applied for a local grant which was a known contact; and are currently applying for another local grant which is another known contact. Networking for us has been the key."

Worthing4Refugees on Fundraising

"Once we felt confident we were likely to get the go ahead, we began serious fund raising to cover the expenses of resettling families: to date £8000+ has been donated by our community, plus many offers of goods and free services - plenty, we estimate, to cover the first family and maybe more."

Fishguard on Fundraising

Resources

Below is a **Template Budget**, which provides an example of how you might begin to work out the financial commitment necessary to support a resettled family. Remember that you have to show you have £9,000 available, but you might not need to spend this all – making a budget can help you work out what you will need.

Settlement Need	Monetary Support?	Amount (£)	In-kind Contribution?	Amount (£)
Start up Costs				
Clothing	☐		☐	
Furniture	☐		☐	
Household Effects	☐		☐	
School start-up costs	☐		☐	
Food staples	☐		☐	
Housing costs (rent deposit, telephone, utilities)	☐		☐	
Ongoing costs				
Affordable and Sustainable Accommodation	☐		☐	
Transportation	☐		☐	
English language provision	☐		☐	
Interpreters	☐		☐	
Childcare	☐		☐	
Totals				

If your group plans to fundraise, please refer to the fundraising regulator code of practice at:
https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/code-of-fundraising-practice/code-of-fundraising-practice/

Community Sponsorship Guide: *Housing*

Goal: Source suitable housing for a refugee family

Your group must provide adequate, safe, and secure housing for two years. Finding housing can take time, so it's best to start early. Reach out to your partner organisations, local authority, and support network to explore housing options in your community.

To meet the housing criteria, a suitable home will need:

- ❑ A minimum two-year lease
- ❑ Its own front door
- ❑ Rent that is affordable and sustainable, taking into account the benefits your family will receive and any benefit cap that applies
- ❑ Proper maintenance
- ❑ Furniture and amenities

**Ideally, housing would also have space for a large family and be accessible for those with limited mobility (or able to be adapted for them).*

"We used our network… in the end we had 3 properties offered to us."

CHARIS

Meeting the Criteria

✓ **Find housing and secure a minimum 2-year lease.** You might:

- **Contact private landlords through local landlord forums or your network.** Be prepared to address a landlord's concerns and answer questions about sponsorship. Consider acting as a guarantor or providing a bond in case of any damage.
- **Appeal to local Housing Associations.**
- **Ask letting agents to share or contact the landlords on their books.**
- **Work with community partners**. Schools, churches, mosques, etc. may have properties or volunteers willing to help.

✓ **Ensure the rent is affordable based on the benefits your family will receive for the entire lease or your group is financially capable of meeting additional costs.**
Your local authority pays housing benefit to a resettled family, which may differ for different housing areas and family sizes.

There is an overall limit to the amount of benefit most people can get and you may also need to consider this benefit cap and the ongoing affordability of the accommodation.

✓ **Ensure housing is furnished with at least:**

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

Meeting the Criteria (continued)

- ✓ **Work with your landlord and local authority to address any void periods in the lease.** Your group may secure housing several months before a family arrives. You may need to negotiate the rental period and/or secure additional funds.
- ✓ **Ensure the property is structurally safe,** including safe electricity and/or gas supplies and adequate ventilation.
- ✓ **Ensure that you have engaged** with the local authority and/or police on the suitability of the location of the property in terms of community cohesion

Additional Considerations:

- **Is there space for a large family?** While any size home will be considered, **houses with 2+ bedrooms will match sooner with a resettled family.** Keep in mind that occupation levels must comply with local authority guidance.
- **Is the house accessible for those with limited mobility? If not,** could the housing be adapted if needed for use by a disabled person (for example, ramp/wheelchair access, downstairs bedroom and bathroom or stair lift)?
- **Is the accommodation accessible to community resources**? The family may be dependent on public transport for aspects of daily life.

"In Taunton …we used the private landlord network. We used our network to search for a property that would be used for refugees. In the end we had 3 properties offered to us. You need a very generous landlord - both in money and in patience. The accommodation needs to be secured very early on and then everything hangs off it. We would have struggled had we gone for a commercial property. You need to find a landlord who wants to rent it out to refugees and so are willing to wait."

CHARIS on Finding Accommodation through Private Landlords

Resources

- A postcode specific search engine for Local Housing Allowance Rates is available at: https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx.
- Information on Housing Benefit is available at: https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit/what-youll-get
- Information on Universal Credit is available at: https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Community Sponsorship Guide: *ESOL & Interpreters*

Goal: Help a resettled family to learn English

Communicating with family members in a way they understand may require interpreters. However, learning English is a critical part of a resettled family's integration into your community. English provides access to education, employment, and relationships within the community. Your group must arrange for English language tuition for adults as soon as possible and within one month of arrival.

To meet the English criteria, your group will need to provide:

- ❑ Interpreters available for 12 months as required
- ❑ Access to qualified ESOL tutors / colleges to provide regular English language tuition
- ❑ Opportunities to supplement formal learning with conversational English
- ❑ Opportunities to obtain formal English language qualifications

"We asked for volunteers to come forward – we have three fully trained ESOL teachers in our network."

CHARIS

Meeting the Criteria

✓ **Provide interpreting services as required for 12 months from arrival.** In the first week you will likely need interpreters to be on hand full time. Consider:

- **Finding volunteer interpreters.** Mosques and local groups may know members of your community who are willing to act as Arabic interpreters.
- **Using available interpreters.** Services like Job Centres and the NHS have interpreters but may need advance notice to provide them at appointments.
- **Paying for professional interpreters.**

✓ **Provide opportunities to use less formal conversational English to** personalise language learning and speed up progress. Consider:

- Creating a rota of volunteers who are able to provide informal practise
- Finding a local ESOL tutor to visit with a family on a voluntary or paid basis,
- Taking a qualification in teaching English to supplement your family's learning.
- Supporting attendance at local community activities, such as children's playgroups, coffee mornings, local clubs, etc.

✓ **Support ESOL progress and obtaining English language qualification.**
When possible, provide the opportunity for individuals to obtain an English language qualification at the appropriate level. This will support access to employment and education.

✓ **Provide formal English language tuition by a suitably qualified ESOL teacher or college for a minimum of 10 hours per week for the first twelve weeks, followed by a minimum of 5 hours per week for the remaining nine months.** Consider:

- **Ability levels:** You need to provide 10 hours per adult per week, so if adults have different abilities this will be 20 hours per week.
- **Availability:** ESOL classes are available at local colleges. Research local availability and register in advance for popular classes.
- **Scheduling:** For example, class times should not conflict with school collection.
- **Cost:** Resettled families benefits include a provision for ESOL tuition, but there may be auxiliary costs, like childcare or transit.

Resources

- You can view accredited ESOL colleges here: http://www.esolcourses.com/esol-courses/uk-esol-course-listings.html
- The online language company, Little Bridge, has pledged free access to Syrian Refugees. It is geared towards children, but adults could make use of it as well. Available at: www.littlebridge.com

"English Language training is a big part of the Community Sponsorship application. We went to lots of colleges and courses but it is very difficult to find any course that they can go to from day one, because they are highly unlikely to have any English and the courses all needed a minor understanding of English.

We asked for volunteers to come forward - we have three fully trained ESOL teachers in our network. They are going to take responsibility for designing the programme for the family. At the beginning we will do it one on one and then we will put together a bespoke course for the family - alongside the local authority. After that we will branch out and register the family [at a college]"

CHARIS on arranging ESOL provision

"The cost of employing interpreters can be significant – but we've managed to get a grant for this"

Fishguard on arranging interpreters

Community Sponsorship Guide: *Safeguarding*

Goal: Ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults with a safeguarding policy.

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. As a sponsor, you have a duty of care to a resettled family. You will need to write a safeguarding policy that ensures appropriate safeguarding measures are in place to protect children and vulnerable adults.

To meet the safeguarding criteria, your safeguarding policy will need to include:

- ❑ Identification of the potential risks to children and vulnerable adults
- ❑ Procedures for staff and volunteer vetting
- ❑ Procedures for staff and volunteer training
- ❑ Clear processes for how concerns are reported and escalated and information on where they can seek further guidance
- ❑ Protection measures for sensitive data
- ❑ Contact information for local safeguarding leads including local police safer neighbourhood teams

Meeting the Criteria

"The key to a working, successful safeguarding policy is to set the agenda for this within the organisation early on, get expert help, get copies of other good safeguarding policies to compare, prioritise training, and set up an effective process for monitoring and reporting."

CHARIS

- ✓ **Identify potential risks to children and vulnerable adults.**

- ✓ **Outline procedures for staff and volunteer vetting** to ensure the suitability and good character of the people providing support for a resettled family. For example, criminal background or Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks may be appropriate given you will be working with vulnerable people.

- ✓ **Outline procedures for staff and volunteer training.** If unable to provide training yourself, ask local adult and children's safeguarding boards and your local authority if there is training your staff or volunteers can access. Training should include: clear expectations for working with children and vulnerable adults, especially when working alone, and cultural competency in order to better understand the refugee experience. The Home Office training will also cover some of these topics.

- ✓ **Implement clear processes for concerns to be reported and addressed**. This should include clear routes for staff and volunteers to report and manage concerns. It should also include clear routes for a resettled family to report concerns about the support they receive.

- ✓ **Outline practices to protect personal data.**

- ✓ **Identify relevant partners and how they will be kept informed of any concerns after arrival**. This includes local police, adult and children safeguarding leads within the local authority, and their contact information.

- ✓ **Keep your safeguarding plan clear and simple**

"CHARIS have a number of individuals on its board of Trustees and management team that have been safeguarding officers and leads within several different local organisations, including schools and churches. These individuals formed a small group that developed the safeguarding policy, framework and training for CHARIS. In addition, CHARIS sought input from the local authority and they were able to assist and advise on aspects of the policy and share parts of their own policy. This enabled CHARIS to draw on the best practices in terms of safeguarding that were available.

CHARIS early on appointed its safeguarding officer and deputy and made safeguarding a high priority organisationally. All CHARIS volunteers, Trustees and management undertook the same training early on. The local authority was asked to conduct the initial training, which they did very well, and CHARIS then built on this and developed further training modules.

CHARIS on Safeguarding

Resources

- NSPCC guidance on writing a safeguarding policy for children can be found here: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/safeguarding/writing-a-safeguarding-policy;
- The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) offer a free online adult safeguarding course as well as other safeguarding resources: http://www.scie.org.uk/adults/safeguarding/
- Your local authority may have online resources for writing a safeguarding policy. For example, Somerset County Council has compiled some reference documents, available at: http://www.somerset.gov.uk/adult-social-care/safeguarding/safeguarding-information-for-providers/
- Draw from any existing expertise in immigrant community organisations, other community sponsors, and organisations with experience in refugee resettlement.
- See the GOV.UK website for more information on eligibility for Disclosure and Barring Service checks: https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check

Community Sponsorship Guide: *Resettlement Plan*

Goal: Develop a clear plan for how to go about resettling a family

A resettlement plan is a detailed plan of action for how your organisation and its partners will deliver resettlement services to a family. It addresses the who, how, when, and where of sponsorship to best prepare your group to provide for the needs of a family as they work towards integration.

To meet the resettlement plan criteria, your plan will need to be:

- ❑ Detailed
- ❑ Supported with evidence
- ❑ Action-oriented
- ❑ Supported with contingency plans
- ❑ Comprehensive, covering the full list of requirements for resettlement and integration

"it can look daunting, but it is very do-able."

CHARIS

Meeting the Criteria

✓ **Include as much detail as possible.**
When developing your resettlement plan, a useful practice is starting with a particular property size and location in mind in order to provide the detail necessary.

✓ **Provide evidence of ability to deliver key services, where necessary.**
Consider the type of expertise needed to meet the requirements for resettlement, and explain where you will source this expertise, whether from your organisation or your partners.
Evidence of necessary skills might include:

- Individuals with financial experience to manage the budgeting aspects
- Qualified English Language tutors
- Volunteers to act as interpreters
- Practising or recently retired health professionals
- Employment specialists
- Local authority contacts for connections to local services (e.g. school admissions, ESOL)
- Voluntary organisations specialising in refugee integration support

✓ **Build in contingency plans where necessary.**

✓ **Be action-oriented: focus on the "how" rather than the "what".**
For example, when discussing accommodation, focus on answering questions like, "How will you register a family with the utility company? How will you make sure payment has been arranged? How will you provide orientation to a family in a way they understand?"

✓ **Address the full range of requirements for resettlement and integration. This includes:**

- Accommodation
- Interpretation services
- ESOL training and qualifications
- Access to appropriate medical services
- Access to digital services
- School registration
- Benefit assessments
- Access to employment services
- Arrival day plans
- Record keeping, monitoring and evaluation, and privacy
- Links with key partners within the LA and police

"One of the benefits of going through and working the detail out is that it forces you to cover everything you will need when the family arrives. We found that we had to add people to our volunteer network with different skills. We hadn't realised how important it was to have someone who understood how the benefit system work. We had to find someone who will be able to sit down with the family when they arrive.

Overall it took us about 6 months to think through our resettlement plan - but as I look at our document now it has an incredible amount of details compared to when we started. It is all very do-able stuff but you have to be methodical in ensuring all the areas are covered. It is absolutely worth using the resettlement plan and thinking how you will deliver all the different sections. For someone who is not used to dealing with formal paperwork it can look daunting, but it is very do-able. I hope our support programme is going to be a lot stronger as a result of the time that we spent doing it.

We asked the groups who were ahead of us [in the application process] for advice on certain areas which was very helpful. When you look at the resettlement plan when they are finished they are very bespoke to the family. You can't just pick up a resettlement plan and copy it, but having access to other community sponsors is very useful.

One of the benefits of doing this is that it brings people together for a common purpose. Of our 10 different volunteers, there are 8 different churches represented."

CHARIS on Resettlement Planning

Resources

A template of the resettlement plan with guiding questions is available at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship

Community Sponsorship Guide: *Local Authority Consent*

Goal: Work with your Local Authority and obtain their consent

Your local authority plays a key role in sponsorship and **must provide written consent for your organisation to sponsor a family and confirm that your identified property is suitable.** Not only is your local authority a gateway to accessing public services in your area, they also assume responsibility for the resettled family if for any reason your organisation is unable to fulfil your role as a sponsor.

To meet the local authority criteria, your group will need to:

- ❑ Make a case for your organisation, your community, and sponsorship
- ❑ Address any concerns your local authority may have
- ❑ Reflect on any suggestions made by your local authority and revise your application accordingly
- ❑ Obtain your local authority's written consent

Meeting the requirements

✓ **Identify the correct local authority and their position on resettlement.** You might call your local authority to see if someone is already in charge of refugee resettlement or arrange to meet with council members who may be supportive of your aims.

✓ **Gather evidence on your community's feelings toward sponsorship.** Show that members of your community are supportive of sponsorship. Work with your LA to identify any community tensions and how you will address them. Some groups have hosted photography exhibitions to highlight refugee issues and raise local support for sponsorship.

✓ **Demonstrate your group's suitability to undertake sponsorship.** Discuss relevant experience, support personnel and roles, and partnerships that will support your effort.

✓ **Consider the financial impact on the local authority.** Show that you have spoken with local schools and other services (e.g. GP) and that there is appropriate support available.

✓ **Investigate available services,** e.g. interpreters, ESOL classes, specialist medical care.

"The key to our working with the local authority has been being able to build trust…We have sought to build relationships and try to understand what they need to know about us…Our LA has a 'can do' attitude which has greatly helped us."

Worthing4Refugees

✓ **Research the availability and cost of housing in the proposed area.** Consider how limited housing, the benefit cap, and school places might affect the sustainability of housing.

✓ **Familiarise yourself with cultural resources in your area,** e.g. mosques, Arabic speaking groups or communities, and availability of Syrian food.

✓ **Identify the benefits of sponsorship for the family and your community.** For example, your sponsorship group might create closer links between local mosques and other community groups.

✓ **Draft a resettlement plan in which you identify the roles of partners and ask for your local authority's feedback.**

"We are not experts in refugee resettlement but we have a long history of responding to human need in practical ways and have a good mix of skills, ages and backgrounds within our congregation. Over the years we have had varying contact with our local authority in Merton but as the new leader of the church I was building a new relationship in regards to community sponsorship.

Before we made our first approach to Merton we were keen to make some serious progress with our application to ensure that we were equipped to respond to particular queries and concerns as well as demonstrate our ability to deliver. We had already identified a property and done some good work on the resettlement plan. We were aware that they were not participating in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme due to lack of accommodation in the borough but were keen to find alternative ways to support refugees.

The Home Office helped to arrange the initial meeting with council officers which turned out to be extremely positive and we received full backing. Since that time a strong working relationship has developed. Once we had received details about the family assigned to us we were able to meet and consider how we could work together to meet their specific needs. Now the family has arrived, we continue to stay in contact and update the local authority on developments.

The Salvation Army on Working with the Local Authority

"We spoke to our local County Councillors at an early stage - having them informed and on side was very valuable when we later approached the LA."

Fishguard on Working with the Local Authority

Resources

For additional guidance on working with local authorities, contact your Regional Strategic Migration Partnership. Contact details are available in Annex B of the Full Community Sponsorship Guidance for Prospective Sponsors, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship

"The community sponsorship scheme personalises a huge, human drama, by enabling local communities to welcome and support refugees in a real and tangible way. This scheme opens a path for people to respond with compassion, providing welcome and integration, and should be taken up as widely as possible."

Cardinal Nichols

For More Information:

Caritas Social Action Network and Caritas Salford

Email: Sean Ryan, National Caritas Coordinator

s.ryan@caritasalford.org.uk

Phone: Faith Anderson, CSAN Public Affairs Officer

0207 870 2210

Website: www.csan.org.uk/community-sponsorship/

Home Office

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship

caritas social action network

Caritas Diocese of Salford