



Home Office



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Department
for International
Development

Community Sponsorship

Guidance for prospective sponsors



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

19 July 2016

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

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

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



Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP



Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

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Introduction

We know that many organisations 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 a lead role in resettling families. It explains how the process will work, the criteria prospective sponsors must meet, and how to apply.

In addition to this guidance, a mini guide with a step-by-step guide to becoming a community sponsor is available at:

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

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 Middle East North Africa (MENA) region affected by the conflict. 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.

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; 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 it is possible 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.



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

Case study 1

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

Case study 2

A family made up of a couple, aged 40 years and 28 years, and three daughters aged 8 years, 5 years and 3 years. They are an Iraqi family currently in Jordan. They are a Muslim family who fled Iraq in 2015 as ISIS were entering their neighbourhood. The father feared that ISIS would try to force him to join them and kill him if he refused. While in Jordan, the family's neighbors sent them a picture of their house that had been bombed and destroyed. The family have lost their home and source of income, and have nothing to return to in Iraq. The couple were both teachers in Iraq and speak Arabic. The eldest daughter had been suffering from acute myeloid leukaemia since 2014. She has been receiving treatment in Jordan, however her medical condition is life threatening without further proper treatment. The family has not been able to work in Jordan and has used up all their savings. There is a high risk that the daughter will not be able to continue her treatment.

Case study 3

A family made up of a couple in their 30's, a daughter 6 years old and son 3 years old. They are a Muslim Sudanese family who fled Sudan in 2013 after the father was threatened and interrogated by Abu Taira members, as he witnessed an attack by the Sudanese army. Fearing for their lives, the family fled to Jordan. Both adults can speak, read and write Arabic. The son has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy since birth, needing physiotherapy and special schooling. Due to their son's mobility problems the family requires accommodation without stairs.



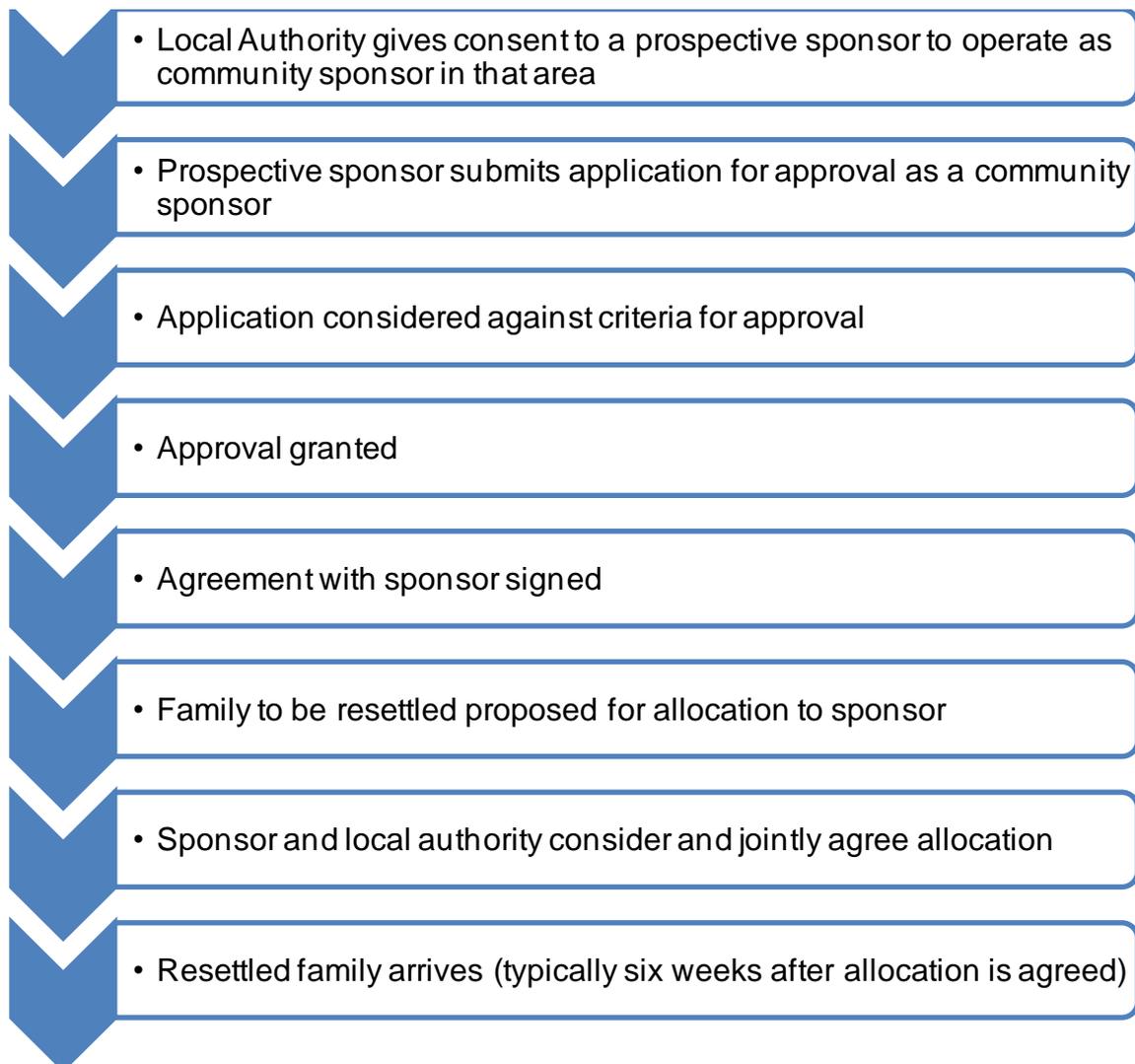
Can anyone be a community sponsor?

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

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

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

Summary of Approval process



What criteria must a community sponsor meet?

Organisation status and lead sponsor

Your organisation must have status as either:

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

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

Experience

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

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.

As part of your application, you must provide evidence that you have available funding of at least £9,000¹. The level of resourcing behind each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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

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

² As evidenced by the previous two years of published accounts with the Charities Commission or Companies House.



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

Housing

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

If you do not have accommodation immediately available but are able to demonstrate that you will be able to obtain appropriate accommodation in time, then we may approve your application in principle on condition that suitable accommodation is secured. Once you have secured the accommodation, we will review your application again ahead of formally giving 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 will be required to provide evidence to demonstrate that the property is in a good state of repair, complies with local authority guidance on occupation levels and is in a suitable area to house a resettled family. Sponsors will normally obtain this evidence by working with their local authority, who may wish to support you with a visit to the property, and the local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team.

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

Local authority consent

You must have the consent of the local authority³ in the area where the resettled family will live. You must obtain written evidence from the local authority (the format to be determined by the local authority) that they consent to the approval of your application. Typically, this consent will be provided by the Chief Executive Officer, Director or Councillor with the authority to consent on behalf of the local authority.

Grounds on which a local authority might object are:

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

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



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

Plan for resettlement

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

Safeguarding

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

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

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

You are encouraged to speak to your local authority who may wish to support you in developing your safeguarding policy and procedures.

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 form, resettlement plan, policies and other documents submitted to support your application. We may also carry out checks and visit you to assess your application in more detail.

Checks on personnel

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

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

Visits

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

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

Successful application

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

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

Unsuccessful application

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

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

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

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

What happens after approval?

Agreement

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

Sponsor induction

You will be required to attend a preparation workshop on sponsorship before you receive a resettled family. This will help you to prepare to receive a resettled family, as well as being an opportunity to network and learn from other sponsors.

Allocating a family for resettlement

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

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

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.

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

Use of Information

We may use the information that you provide to us when you apply for permission to sponsor, or at any time throughout the period of your 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

Annex A – Statement of requirements for sponsors

Accommodation

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 laundrette)
- 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

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 and transport.

Establishing a life in the UK

Resettled family are able to make a life for themselves 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 7 days of arrival in the UK.
- 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.
- Arrange for English language tuition for adults as soon as possible and within one month of arrival.
- Provide formal English language tuition by a suitably qualified ESOL teacher, for a minimum of 10 hours per week for the first twelve weeks, followed by a minimum of 5 hours per week for the remaining nine months.
- 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.
- Provide interpreting services, as required, for 12 months from arrival.



Home Office



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Development

Annex B – Regional strategic migration partnerships – contact details

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