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HM Government

# Community Sponsorship

## Making it Happen



March 2018

Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen  
An overview

Moving to a new environment can be an unsettling experience, especially for those who have been forced to flee their homes. Community Sponsorship is a way for the whole of civil society to be directly involved in helping refugees settle in the UK, providing emotional and practical support to empower families to rebuild their lives and to become self-sufficient members of their new community. Being a sponsor can also bring enormous benefit to the local community, through harnessing the generosity of local people, and creating new bonds between different groups to bring positive changes to people’s lives.

Under the scheme, community sponsors provide families resettled to the UK under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme<sup>1</sup> (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme<sup>2</sup> (VCRS) with integration support for one year, and accommodation for the first two years.

This document is a collection of information sheets covering a range of subjects intended to support community sponsors and groups interested in becoming a community sponsor. These include:

- The Community Sponsor Group: Key Roles and Responsibilities ..... 2
- Managing Expectations ..... 6
- Housing ..... 8
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) ..... 10
- Benefits ..... 12
- Employment ..... 13
- Working with Interpreters ..... 15
- Mental Health ..... 18
- Working towards Self-Sufficiency ..... 21

<sup>1</sup> VPRS is open to all nationalities affected by the Syrian conflict.  
<sup>2</sup> VCRS is open to all children deemed to be “at risk”, and their families, within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Many thanks to the community sponsor groups and organisations whose contributions have been central to the development of these information sheets. Much of the content comes directly from sponsor experiences.

With special gratitude to the following pioneer sponsor groups who have led the way for their contributions to this document:

- ABIDE, Ottery St. Mary
- Caritas (St Monica's RC Church)
- Croeso Abergwaun
- Croeso Teifi
- De Beauvoir Welcomes Refugees
- Refugee Sponsor Training Programme (Canada)
- Salvation Army Raynes Park Community Church

If you have not already done so, please visit the Community Sponsorship page at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship> where more guidance can be found on how to apply to become a sponsor.

## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Key Roles and Responsibilities

*Vital to the success of a community sponsorship arrangement is the community group itself. Acting as a sponsor to a resettled family is hugely rewarding, but it is also a significant responsibility requiring a significant time commitment. A sponsor group will be the primary source of support for the resettled family under their care, so it is important to take the time and effort to develop the key roles and responsibilities needed; to consider how the group will be organised; and to decide upon the ground rules for how the group will deliver resettlement support. Thinking clearly about how the group will work together is essential to delivering effective resettlement, but also establishes an important support structure for individual members of the group.*

Community sponsor groups vary in size but are often made up of 5 to 20 members, some of whom might take on specialist roles. Some groups have found it helpful to have key roles for different elements of activity, and some of these suggestions are set out below. Aside from the Lead Sponsor, these roles are not prescriptive, as what might work well for one group might not be applicable in all cases. There may be other roles needed, some roles could be combined, or some may not be required after a certain period of time. In addition to the core group, there may be others who might be able to provide informal support to the resettled family.

#### **Lead Sponsor**

Every sponsor group must have a Lead Sponsor. The Lead Sponsor is ultimately accountable for the resettlement support provided by the group to the refugee family. The Lead Sponsor's responsibilities include adhering to the legal and financial requirements; establishing that a robust safeguarding policy is in place and adhered to; ensuring group members are suitable to support a refugee family and that consideration is given to conducting Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where applicable.

In some cases, sponsor groups may partner up with a larger organisation or umbrella charity who will act as Lead Sponsor and signatory to the formal Sponsor Agreement with the Home Office.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/554049/2016-09-16\\_SAMPLE\\_Full\\_Community\\_Sponsorship\\_Agreement\\_for\\_govuk.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/554049/2016-09-16_SAMPLE_Full_Community_Sponsorship_Agreement_for_govuk.pdf)

#### **Chair**

Chairs all meetings pertaining to community sponsorship, including meetings of the core group, and those involving the wider group.

#### **Secretary**

Responsible for preparing and distributing the agenda for all meetings, taking minutes, communicating with the wider group on behalf of the core group, and maintaining records of meetings and activities of the group.

### **Project Manager**

Responsible for leading the delivery of the community sponsorship 'project', from application through to delivery of the resettlement plan. The Project Manager is often the group's main point of contact with the Home Office.

### **Finance Lead**

Responsible for the group's finances, including oversight of all aspects of the financial administration of the group (e.g. collation and disbursement of all monies, financial reporting, financial projections, contingency planning, provision of financial and budgeting information). They may also be responsible for all financial advice and support provided to the family.

### **Accommodation Lead**

Responsible for seeking assurances from the local Safer Neighbourhood Policing team that they do not have any concerns about the address being used to house a refugee family, and also offering the local authority an opportunity to inspect the property. Responsible for overseeing the sourcing, preparation, furnishing, maintenance and upkeep of suitable accommodation for the refugee family, and for timely communication between the group, the Housing Provider/Landlord and the family.

### **Employment & Benefits Lead**

Responsible for establishing links with relevant staff at local DWP offices and for ensuring timely registration of the family for all applicable benefits, and the continuation of benefit claims thereafter. They should also work with the family to identify suitable voluntary and paid work opportunities, training for working age family members, and supporting the adults on their journey to secure full-time employment.

### **Education Lead**

Responsible for overseeing the enrolment and integration of the children into appropriate schools, and other suitable adult education and training. They should also seek to maintain strong and effective links with primary schools, secondary schools and local colleges as appropriate.

### **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Lead**

Responsible for the provision of ESOL, ensuring that family members receive the required hours of training.

### **Family Welfare Lead**

Responsible for ensuring timely and effective provision for the refugee family's general health and welfare, including local GP registration, additional healthcare provision as required, starter packs of food, and facilitating and supporting appointments. They should also seek to provide ongoing advice, information and training sufficient to equip the family to manage their own longer-term health and welfare needs.

### **Fundraising Officer**

Responsible for devising, promoting, and coordinating all fundraising activity in support of the aims of the sponsor group.

### **Communications Officer**

Responsible for ensuring positive and effective communications with all stakeholders, the local community, partner agencies and media to further the aims of the group. Please be aware that all proposed media activities should be referred to the Home Office for prior approval.

### **Safeguarding Lead**

Responsible for drawing up the group's safeguarding policy and procedures and ensuring that appropriate reporting and escalation procedures are in place and adhered to. They should also seek to liaise with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

### **Additional Support**

In addition to the more formal roles that may exist within a core sponsor group, there may be opportunities to harness the goodwill of the wider community. Additional volunteers can play a valuable role by assisting a resettled family in a number of ways, e.g. with the provision of conversational English, befriending, or with helping the family to navigate the local area and making connections with the wider community.

*In the summer of 2015 the news was full of terrible reports of refugees fleeing from war torn Syria and other countries that shocked us all, and we wanted to do something. We hoped that through the power of prayer, together with our actions, we could make a real difference to the lives of some refugees. The action commenced and ... our journey began.*

*Through our endless fundraising efforts and reaching out to the community, we managed to establish contacts with Caritas. Our group were approached to become one of only five Vanguard sponsoring groups in the whole country. In an action plan we had to explore that we had sufficient funds, as well as the necessary skills to resettle a Syrian refugee family in our community. We felt it was necessary to establish a more formal group, with clear roles and responsibilities and gain the full support of the Parish before fully confirming our involvement. Parishioners were asked to "sign up" to the group, offering their time and skills in specific, or general roles, as well as making (and gift aiding) donations. The resultant meeting was very well attended; key roles and group proposals were established and various group members were "voted in" to lead teams and take on strategic roles etc.*

*Through several discussions; an agreement was reached that the newly established "Parish Refugee Sponsorship Group" (RSG) would work under the umbrella of Caritas, who would be the lead sponsor, providing the RSG with relevant support and guidance as well as providing professional back up. (This removed the need for applying for charitable status or a need for a constitution.)*

*The RSG Action Plan gradually started to take form and was eventually reduced to several areas; Accommodation, Welfare, Finance, Education, Employment and Transport. Team-leaders were given the responsibility for each area supported with a small team of organisers. A Chair, Vice-Chair, secretary and other specific roles were also taken up by volunteers.*

**St Monica's - Caritas**

### **Working Together**

As well as thinking about the roles that different members of the group might play, it is worth taking the time to consider how the group will best work together. Is there a particular structure, or system of governance that would work best for the composition of your group? Are there practices that could be incorporated to ensure that individual members are supported to deliver their best? Are there practical tools that could be used to facilitate a smoother way of working, e.g. rotas, online calendars, project management tools, etc?

### **Working with Partners**

It is important to make the time and effort to nurture good relationships with a number of organisations in your community. For instance, your group must obtain written consent from the local authority for your organisation to sponsor a family, and confirm that your identified property is suitable. Establishing positive engagement with the local authority from the outset is an essential part of the process. Similarly, making connections with Regional ESOL Coordinators, DWP Partnership Managers, and Strategic Migration Partnerships (see *Useful contacts and information* below) will help your group access information to help in the resettlement of a refugee family.



## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Managing Expectations

*Managing the expectations of communities and resettled families is a key element to developing positive relationships and ensuring families integrate into their new communities. You might have expectations on how resettled families will act or the kind of relationship you may form with them. Refugees might also have assumptions about your group or what life in the UK may actually be like. Some of the most common expectations are outlined below, along with some potential ways of managing them.*

No one person is the same. Each has their own story, personality, likes and dislikes. All of those resettled in the UK under the VPRS and the VCRS will have been recognised as “vulnerable” by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). How people react to their past experiences and their current situation will differ, but your group should be prepared to adapt and try to understand their reactions without judgment.

Moving to a new environment can be an unsettling experience for anyone, but especially for those who have been forced to flee their homes. Community sponsorship requires an understanding that a refugee family’s arrival in the UK is just the beginning of their journey towards rebuilding their lives. While not every situation will be the same, there is value in considering that it is likely that the family will need a period

of adjustment as they settle into life in the UK, and that this may present itself as an ongoing need.

It is normal to have expectations about how sponsorship will work, and to make assumptions about the family. Acknowledge these assumptions for what they are and recognise that you may be surprised if the reality does not exactly match what you anticipated. The important thing is to be open, be aware, and to manage your own expectations.

Remember it’s a two-way relationship, and the family is likely to have their own set of expectations and assumptions. Your role as a sponsor is to welcome, support and empower families towards self-sufficiency. Part of that is to help the family manage their own expectations of what they can really expect from their new life in the UK.

### **Working with your Community**

- Discuss among yourselves what expectations you might have of resettlement. You may find the exercise in the box below helpful to work through as a group
- Talk with community sponsors who have resettled families before. The community of existing sponsors is increasingly growing and is a useful source of knowledge and experience.
- You may want to contact representatives from other refugee or diaspora communities in UK as they may have valuable insights into your family's culture, and of their resettlement journey.
- Engage your wider community to make them aware of resettlement and manage any expectations they may have.

*Uncertainty, fake news and fear create negativity but this can be addressed and changed. Most people like to be involved in doing good.*

**Croeso Abergwaun**

### **Working with your Family**

- Manage the family's expectations from the beginning, and never make promises that may not be fulfilled.
- Anticipate where misunderstandings might occur around issues that could include religion, ethnicity, food and drink, marriage, child-raising, gender, mental health, smoking, littering, etc.
- Some behaviour may be perfectly innocent but is not socially acceptable in the UK. Equally, there may be British practices that seem unusual to a newly resettled family. Take the time to discuss these differences with families and make sure they are aware of British laws and values.

**To manage your expectations and those of your family it might be worthwhile reflecting on the following questions and discussing them in your sponsor group:**

1. What are your expectations of resettling a family in your community?
2. What expectations do you think your family might have for their new life in the UK?
3. Do you think these expectations are realistic or unrealistic?
4. Why do you think you both have these expectations?
4. How can you make sure both of your expectations are more realistic?
5. What should you do if expectations are not met?

## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Housing

*Securing affordable and suitable housing, for a period of two years, will help families resettle into their new communities. Accommodation not only needs to be close enough to local amenities, such as schools and shops to allow families to engage with their local communities, but many refugees require adapted accommodation so groups need to think about whether they can provide accommodation which is suitable for use by individuals with potentially complex medical needs. Funding is available to enable groups to make adaptations to properties. Below are some ideas on how to secure and prepare housing.*

#### Getting Started

- Engage with a housing provider, such as a housing association, major landlords or property companies, who may be able to advise on housing in your local area.
- Find a property suitably located to local amenities, including schools and shops.
- Check with the Safer Neighbourhood Policing team that they do not have any concerns about the proposed address being used to house a refugee family.
- Offer the local authority an opportunity to inspect the property, should they wish to do so.
- Understand the Local Housing Allowance rates and the impact the benefit cap might have on affordability of the housing.
- If you decide to accept donated items, make sure that they are of an acceptable standard, clean, and safe to use.
- Do not enter into long-term agreements on bills and utilities as this is a decision for families to make.
- Arrange a day or days to fit out the house and ask your group to volunteer to help. You may also want to ask if trades-people want to volunteer.
- Make sure that everything in the house is ready and working before arrival and make a note of anything that might need to be replaced in the near future.
- Facilitating, or signposting how contact with family and friends from back home can be maintained, e.g. online, through social media, is likely to be very important to families resettled in the UK.

#### Preparing the House

- Assess what is required to furnish the house and make an appeal for furniture in your community.
- It is worth investigating with utility companies (e.g. electricity, gas and

water) whether the family would be entitled to any concessions.

- Having met your family at the airport you will then travel with them to their new home. Upon arrival, go through the basics of the house - cooker, heating, shower, etc. They may be tired from a long journey, so be aware that you might need to leave them to rest and settle in.

### Welcoming the Family

- Leave a contact number with the family and be on standby to provide support in the event of a problem. You will need to make an interpreter available 24/7 for a minimum of the first week after the family arrive.
- Make regular visits to the family, with an interpreter (if necessary) over the next few weeks to ensure they are settling in and that everything in the house is working.



### Encouraging Independence

- Work with the family to understand the utility and amenity suppliers and ensure that the service meets the family's needs.
- Over time work towards handing over responsibility to the family for

reporting any issues directly to providers.

- Begin to encourage family members to explore their local area without your group, so they become increasingly confident of their surroundings.

## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

*The ability to communicate in English is a vital step towards integrating into UK society. Learning to speak and comprehend English facilitates access to education, employment, medical care and local amenities. It is vital to help refugees feel part of their new communities. Learning English can be done through formal lessons or informal interactions within the community. Descriptions of both types of learning are outlined below, along with some ideas for how to deliver this training.*

#### **Formal Language Training**

Shortly after first welcoming your family, each member should be assessed to determine their English language abilities. Formal language training should then be provided by qualified ESOL tutors, often at local colleges. Formal training allows refugees to attain qualifications which will help them find work. You will need to ensure that eight hours a week of formal ESOL teaching is provided to each adult member of the family over their first 12 months in the UK, or until they have reached ESOL entry level three, if this is sooner. Each refugee should aim to make one ESOL level of progress (in speaking, listening, reading, and writing) over this year.

#### **Informal Language Training**

Informal English training can take place in any location, revolve around a wide range of activities (e.g. leisure activities, sports, community events, etc.), and involve working with a variety of English speakers. Informal training does not provide qualifications but it does build confidence and help families integrate into your community and learn English.

*Experienced ESOL tutors, Dr. Maggie Stringer and Boyd Williams, believe that “all activity and involvement in a community with others is pivotal to the efficient use and learning of language”. They developed an informal way of teaching English that used voluntary tutors to great effect. These tutors were often trained classroom teachers and worked alongside qualified ESOL tutors, acting as partners in role-play exercises. The volunteers also accompanied families in day-to-day activities. This helped develop refugees’ ability to use English in different situations around the community, like buying food from a supermarket or attending social events.*

**Croeso Abergwaun**

#### **Ideas for Formal Language Teaching**

- Make sure you arrange ESOL lessons and assessments of each refugee’s English ability before arrival. If you need advice on this contact your regional ESOL coordinator (see *Useful contacts*
- Some sponsors provide more training in the first few months to help families reach a basic standard of English quickly. If your family feel they would benefit then you might want to do this too.

and information at the end of this document).

*We did an enormous amount of preparatory work, including lots of public fundraising. One result was that most of the town, including every shop, knew about the scheme. They were proud of it, proud to have given so much. But as we waited for the family we had no idea what to expect. One surprise has been the cultural enrichment and the fun of communicating without much common language. Integration is a two way process, I find we are all learners together. The mother of our family is at home with a toddler most of the time, so it is here that she teaches some of us Arabic in a little class. What a language, what a different world this opens up. We have a lot of fun learning, it makes our relationship more robust and equal.*

**Croeso Teifi**

- Family members are often keen to start work. Entering the job market and volunteering opportunities are great ways to integrate into society and to learn English. However, learning English should continue to be a priority, and will often open up better job opportunities in the future.
- Families may not always want to be separated for formal lessons. Some sponsors have solved this issue by hosting lessons in local crèches or community centres with a separate play area for children.
- If families are willing, then try to attend events in the community to help them learn English. This is a great chance to get your community involved and help integrate your families.
- Some very elderly or vulnerable people might struggle to take part in formal English lessons. In these cases use informal teaching that can help prepare them for more formal tuition.

### ***Ideas for Informal Language Teaching***

- Ask what aspects of English a family might be interested in learning. They may have certain interests or needs and want to know how to talk about them.
- Contact local schools to see if they may be interested in supporting your family. Many sponsors have found local teachers are very interested in helping as volunteers.

*They are truly amazing. The amount of language which they have acquired in such a short period of time is quite astounding.*

**Croeso Abergwaun**



## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Benefits

*While many refugees resettled in the UK will want to enter the job market as soon as possible in order to become self-sufficient, and to integrate into their new communities; it is important that newly arrived families have access to the benefits that they are entitled to receive. It is also important for them to have support from the sponsor group to understand how to navigate the process.*

#### Benefits

- Connect with the local DWP Partnership Manager in advance to tell them about the resettlement scheme and the roles that the Home Office and local authority play. Developing a relationship with Job Centre staff will be important going forward. Contact details for the Regional Partnership Managers can be found below in *Useful contacts and information*.
- Make sure you research the benefits system and keep up to date with any major developments. You will need to understand both the older legacy benefits system and the new Universal Credit system. Further support can be found on <https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/>
- You can learn more about these systems on GOV.UK, or via your Partnership Manager, or from Citizens Advice.
- Be aware of what benefits your family is entitled to receive, and plan accordingly to ensure they will be able to support themselves. Be prepared to attend all benefits appointments for the first few months to ensure that your family is aware of how the system works.
- Be aware of how your family will be expected to submit, and maintain, their claim. The default for Universal Credit is a digital process, although there are circumstances when this may not apply. Be prepared to support your family in submitting their digital claim, and fulfilling their ongoing digital obligations. Easy access to a computer will make this much simpler.
- Job Centres will provide translating services if given advanced warning, though you can use your own if desired.
- Support your principal claimant until their English is good enough for them to do so independently, at which point you should encourage them to attend their fortnightly work search review on their own.

## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Employment

*Securing employment is an important step towards resettled refugee families developing self-sufficiency. The job markets that refugees are familiar with may be very different from those in the UK, and many refugees will often need to build up their experience by volunteering or doing part-time jobs before securing long-term employment. These roles are vital for building confidence, developing skills (including English), and helping refugees fully integrate into their new communities.*

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## **Employment**

- Many refugees may be used to a more informal employment system and may not be familiar with how to write a CV or prepare for and undergo an interview. Try not to take understanding of these processes as a given and be ready to offer support to family members in these areas. The help of individuals with recruitment experience can be particularly beneficial.
- Encourage families to use a computer and the internet to make benefits claims and search for jobs. IT literacy is an important skill that could help with future employment, but also with general life skills as more and more services are made accessible online.
- Developing proficiency in English is vital in opening up opportunities to enter the job market. Volunteering can be a step towards improve English language skills, as well as providing a route towards employment.
- Research the voluntary sector in your local area and establish links with trusted organisations that may be able to offer work experience to family members. Make sure that any volunteering, work experience placements or part-time work, fit with the requirements of the Job Centre.
- Identify local employers who would be open to providing some initial paid work experience. These could be a connection of your sponsor group, a business owner from the diaspora community, or opportunities provided because of the corporate social responsibility programmes offered by larger companies.
- Ensure that your family members who want to work are aware of key features of UK employment law, such as the minimum wage, maximum working hours, and that workers in the UK sign employment contracts before they start paid work.



- Ensure, too, that you and your family are aware of in-work benefits.
- Start preparing at an early stage to help family members achieve their long-term objectives. Ask what work they have done previously, or

might like to take up in the future, and help them understand what qualifications they might need to obtain to enable them to achieve these goals. In some cases, you may also want to find shadowing opportunities

*From the very first day that the family arrived, the father expressed his desire to start work as soon as possible. Shortly into the second month he began to volunteer one afternoon a week at a local charity shop connected with the sponsorship group. We explained that this was a good step towards employment as he was gaining some experience in a UK work environment, it would be something to put on his CV, he would have opportunities to practise English, and it would enable someone to give him a reference.*

*The manager of the charity shop found him to be a real asset and an extremely hard worker. A month later a part-time cleaning job became available at a Salvation Army centre. We supported him with his application and he was offered the job. Another month on, he secured a second part-time job. This was as a kitchen assistant in a Lebanese café that our interpreters had links with. Following an interview, he was offered 4 hours a week and following a trial period was offered a further 2 hours a week. He now works 10 hours a week altogether whilst attending a further 10 hours of English classes per week. We have seen a great leap forward in his confidence, language skills and general wellbeing through work.*

**Salvation Army Raynes Park Community Church**

## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Working with Interpreters

*The role of interpreters is to support communication between people who do not share a common language. Interpreters are likely to be key to early interactions with resettled families. Here are some guidelines and advice that you should consider when working with interpreters.*

1. Interpreters must respect the need for confidentiality.
2. Interpreters must be neutral and not pass judgment or impose their views.
3. Interpreters must fully interpret everything as closely in wording, style and grammar as possible. Much can be lost if an interpreter chooses to summarise or alter what they hear.
4. Friends and family members, especially children, should not be used as interpreters for official purposes, or as a matter of routine. Refugees may feel uncomfortable disclosing personal or sensitive information in the presence of family or friends.
5. Try to use interpreters who refugees will be open and comfortable working with. You may wish to consider that some cultures may feel more comfortable talking with someone of a similar age or gender.

*Interpreters play a crucial role so it's essential to develop an effective co-working relationship. Spend time before a session outlining what's to be discussed and deciding what interpreting style to use. While it's sometimes essential for accuracy to use 'word-for-word' direct speech, we find a more flexible, informal approach works best in many community sponsorship settings.*

*De-briefing is also important. You may not have fully understood a conversation or been confused by culturally different non-verbal communication e.g. body language, tone of voice and gestures which the interpreter should be able to help clarify. Also remember interpreters are empathic, emotional individuals working with often very traumatised people, and may need support and the opportunity to off-load.*

**Croeso Abergwaun**

### ***Guidance for Interpreters***

- Always speak slowly and clearly. You may find it useful to spell out any foreign name or place mentioned by those you are interpreting for.
- Be present and focused. Consider turning off phones, or anything that might cause a distraction.
- Immediately let everyone present know if you have any difficulty interpreting. Always be honest about your limitations.
- Clarify what style of interpreting is required. This will depend on the level of accuracy required and the formality or informality of the situation
- Ensure non-verbal communication is interpreted correctly as it may mean different things in different cultures.
- Remain calm, even if you hear something unpleasant or controversial. Interpreting can be demanding and it is important to remember to take care of your mental health and wellbeing.
- Always accurately interpret language, even if it may be offensive. It is important to know when there may be genuine tensions or disagreements.
- Only interrupt to make corrections to your interpretation, ask for clarification, or to resolve a misunderstanding.
- Do not anticipate what the family member is trying to say.



### ***Working with Interpreters***

- Some sponsor groups have found that incorporating their interpreters within the core team, or working with them very closely has been a positive experience, as they may often be able to add valuable cultural insights.
- At the same token, it should not be assumed that they will always be cultural experts.
- When having meetings, brief interpreters beforehand about the purpose.
- Remember to make eye contact with the refugee when addressing them and listening to them speak. Do not make them feel excluded by focusing on the interpreter.
- Always be aware of how non-verbal communication can be interpreted. Consistent eye contact, for example, is viewed differently in some cultures.
- Interpreters or families may not always understand, even if they nod or say "yes". Check understanding by asking for feedback on what you have said.
- Conclude meetings by checking everything was understood.
- Make sure your interpreters are taking care of themselves and their mental wellbeing after sessions.



## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Mental Health

*Refugee families resettled to the UK have been identified as vulnerable, including women and children at risk, and survivors of torture and violence. It is important to recognise that the experience of refugees, both before arriving and also as they adjust to their new lives in the UK, may have an impact on their mental health and wellbeing. There is help and advice available, some of which is outlined below. It is also important to remember to care for the wellbeing of those in your sponsor group.*

For those fleeing conflict, mental health issues can be caused by displacement, detachment from family members and other social units, other “everyday” issues, and a range of other factors, not just through direct harassment or violence. The process of resettlement can in itself be quite difficult for some; having to move to a country with a different culture and language and being separated from loved ones and familiar surroundings.

It is important to remember that mental health problems may not manifest themselves immediately and may initially surface as a physical symptom, e.g. migraine or stomach pains, as physical illness may be considered to be more culturally acceptable. These conditions can be temporary, and with the right treatment and/or support, the individual can recover.

The role that gender plays might also be a consideration as cultural differences regarding mental health issues may be felt more acutely by members of one gender than the other. Similarly, the way that parents and their children process their experiences may differ greatly.

#### ***What can you do to help?***

You do not need to be a professional to notice the signs of a mental health problem, however you should always leave formal diagnoses to professionals. It is possible to offer support and assistance without a formal diagnosis, however you should support and encourage people to seek professional help.

For those who do not wish to undergo formal treatment – whether this be medication or talking cure therapies like counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy – other approaches which focus more on making a positive impact than the negative feelings can be effective. These can include organising volunteer work, craft classes, or ensuring that individuals have access to a device to communicate with their families and friends abroad, as well as encouraging them to seek and build new relationships within their new community.



### ***The Importance of Self-Care***

When discussing the experiences of individuals and families, it is important to understand the potential for vicarious trauma (VT) to occur. VT is a process of change resulting from empathetic engagement with trauma survivors. Anyone who engages empathetically with survivors of traumatic incidents, torture, and

material relating to their trauma, is potentially affected.

There is some information provided in the resources below, however if you feel that your mental health, or that of your sponsor group members (including interpreters), has been affected, the advice of a GP should be sought.

*Our sponsorship group spent some time before the family arrived considering how best to support their general wellbeing and mental health. Whilst none of us were mental health experts, we identified group members who used pastoral, listening and supporting people skills in their work life. Before the family arrived, we ran training sessions exploring and discussing the kinds of things to look out for and how things might change over time. Whilst some members of the sponsorship team had a particular focus to their support such as language support, benefits or education, others purely had the role of visiting the family with no particular agenda other than to chat, listen and offer encouragement. As time has gone on and the family settled into a routine this area has become more and more important. At team meetings we ensure we had time to discuss how each member of the family is doing with their general wellbeing and any particular extra support that might be required.*

**Salvation Army Raynes Park Community Church**

### ***Signs That Someone Might Need Help***

If several of the following are occurring, it may be useful to follow up with a mental health professional.

- Withdrawal — withdrawal from social activities and loss of interest in others.
- Problems thinking — problems with concentration, memory or logical thought and speech that are hard to explain.
- Increased sensitivity — sensitive to sights, sounds, smells or touch.
- Feeling disconnected — an unclear feeling of being disconnected from oneself or one's surroundings.
- Mood swings — quick and hasty changes of emotions and feelings.
- Nervousness — fear or suspiciousness of others or a strong nervous feeling.
- Sleep or appetite pattern changes — dramatic sleep and appetite changes or decline in personal care.
- Consumption of alcohol, prescription drugs, etc – increased consumption of, or reliance on alcohol or drugs.



### Useful Resources

Local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups will be able to inform you what professional services are available within your area and how these can be accessed.

Please note that some of the resources below may not be available across the whole of the UK.

NHS England and Mind resource: 'Commissioning Mental Health Services for vulnerable adult migrants: Guidance for Commissioners'

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/migrants/>

- PHE migrant health guide, which includes guide on NHS entitlements: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/health-protection/migrant-health-guide>
- MIND 'Improving Mental Health Support for refugee communities – an advocacy approach': [http://www.mind.org.uk/media/192447/refugee\\_report\\_1.pdf](http://www.mind.org.uk/media/192447/refugee_report_1.pdf)
- UNHCR 'Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians': <http://www.unhcr.org/55f6b90f9.pdf>
- Royal College of Psychiatrists 'Asylum seekers and refugees mental health network': <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workingpsychiatry/faculties/generaladultpsychiatry/aboutthefaculty/networks/asylumseekersandrefugees.aspx>
- University of Manchester: 'Parenting advice for families exposed to the Syrian conflict': <http://research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/pfrg/resources>
- Women's Aid advice for those working with Domestic Abuse Survivors: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>
- NHS Self Care Information: <http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>
- The Big White Wall: Self care tool: <https://www.bigwhitewall.com/v2/landingUK.aspx>
- NHS Entitlements: Migrant Health Guide: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide>

## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Working towards Self-Sufficiency

*Families are resettled to the UK so that they can begin to rebuild their lives, and a central feature of this goal is the ability to eventually become independent and self-sufficient. This is often challenging, as families will need to acclimatise to their new homes, learn a new language, and find work. Sponsors help families along every step of this journey but must also be aware of the need to balance a desire to help with the need to increasingly encourage greater independence.*

- Make it part your group's plan to work towards self-sufficiency, and highlight it early on in the relationship with the family so that it is clear that the group's day-to-day support will eventually be reduced.
  - Be clear with the family when visits are being made as part of your sponsor obligations, and when your visits are more for social or informal reasons.
  - While it will be necessary to help the family navigate their new and unfamiliar lives in the UK, encourage them to do things for themselves when the time is right, e.g. show them the local shops, travel with them to college or to appointments on a few occasions, etc. but aim for them to begin doing things for themselves.
  - If the family asks you to do certain tasks for them, think about providing them with support to complete the task themselves, e.g. explaining what they need to do in order to make a GP's appointment.
  - Understand that progress will be different for different people, and that perhaps some members of the family might need additional support for a little longer, e.g. for someone who has not been accustomed to being outside the home alone.
- 
- Equip your family with a plan of how to deal with occurrences which may seem straightforward to many, but would be unfamiliar to someone new to the UK, for example, how to deal with cold callers on the phone or in person.
  - Encourage families to consider building links within the wider community perhaps through volunteering opportunities.
  - Consider reaching out to members of an established diaspora community to help avoid the family becoming solely reliant on the sponsor group.



- A practical tip is to provide the family with a calendar which shows them all of their appointments. This will help them manage their

appointments, and provide them with some autonomy. Having a calendar in English also supports their language skills.



## Community Sponsorship – Making it Happen

### Useful contacts and information

If you would like to contact the Home Office about the Community Sponsorship Scheme, please email [communitysponsorship@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:communitysponsorship@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

You may also wish to contact the Strategic Migration Partnership for your region:

Regional Strategic Migration Partnership Contact List		
East of England	Gosia Strona	<a href="mailto:Malgorzata.Strona@eelga.gov.uk">Malgorzata.Strona@eelga.gov.uk</a>
East Midlands	Sarah Short	<a href="mailto:Sarah.Short@emcouncils.gov.uk">Sarah.Short@emcouncils.gov.uk</a>
London	Nicola Marven	<a href="mailto:Nicola.Marven@london.gov.uk">Nicola.Marven@london.gov.uk</a>
North East	Janine Hartley	<a href="mailto:Janine_Hartley@middlesbrough.gov.uk">Janine_Hartley@middlesbrough.gov.uk</a>
North West	Katie Jones	<a href="mailto:Katie.Jones@manchester.gov.uk">Katie.Jones@manchester.gov.uk</a>
Northern Ireland		<a href="mailto:race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk">race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk</a>
Scotland	Andrew Morrison	<a href="mailto:Andrew@cosla.gov.uk">Andrew@cosla.gov.uk</a>
South East	Roy Millard	<a href="mailto:RoyMillard@secouncils.gov.uk">RoyMillard@secouncils.gov.uk</a>
South West	Kelly-Anne Phillips	<a href="mailto:kelly-anne.phillips@swcouncils.gov.uk">kelly-anne.phillips@swcouncils.gov.uk</a>
Wales	Anne Hubbard	<a href="mailto:Anne.Hubbard@wlga.gov.uk">Anne.Hubbard@wlga.gov.uk</a>
West Midlands	Dally Panesar	<a href="mailto:Dalvinder.Panesar@birmingham.gov.uk">Dalvinder.Panesar@birmingham.gov.uk</a>
Yorkshire and Humberside		<a href="mailto:admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk">admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk</a>

If you would like to make contact with your Regional ESOL Coordinator, please refer to the table below:

<b>Regional ESOL Coordinators Contacts list</b>		
North West of England	Laura Mackey	<a href="mailto:l.mackey@manchester.gov.uk">l.mackey@manchester.gov.uk</a>
Yorkshire & Humberside	Liz Maddocks	<a href="mailto:Liz.Maddocks@migrationyorkshire.org.uk">Liz.Maddocks@migrationyorkshire.org.uk</a>
London	Hannah Boylan	<a href="mailto:Hannah.Boylan@london.gov.uk">Hannah.Boylan@london.gov.uk</a>
North East	Janine Hartley	<a href="mailto:Janine_Hartley@middlesbrough.gov.uk">Janine_Hartley@middlesbrough.gov.uk</a>
East Midlands	Sarah Short	<a href="mailto:sarah.short@emcouncils.gov.uk">sarah.short@emcouncils.gov.uk</a>
Northern Ireland	Ligia Parizzi	<a href="mailto:LParizzi@belfastmet.ac.uk">LParizzi@belfastmet.ac.uk</a>
Scotland	Peter Broomfield	<a href="mailto:peter@cosla.gov.uk">peter@cosla.gov.uk</a>
East of England	Gill Searl	<a href="mailto:refugees@linguagloss.com">refugees@linguagloss.com</a>
South West	Bronwyn Prosser	<a href="mailto:bronwyn.prosser@swcouncils.gov.uk">bronwyn.prosser@swcouncils.gov.uk</a>
Wales	Erica Williams	<a href="mailto:erica.williams@wlga.gov.uk">erica.williams@wlga.gov.uk</a>
West Midlands	Bethany Finch	<a href="mailto:bethany.finch@birmingham.gov.uk">bethany.finch@birmingham.gov.uk</a>
South East	Alex Stevenson	<a href="mailto:alex.stevenson@learningandwork.org.uk">alex.stevenson@learningandwork.org.uk</a>

Contacts for DWP Regional Partnership Managers can be found here:

<b>DWP Regional Partnership Managers Contact list</b>		
Scotland	Susanne Barr	<a href="mailto:SUSANNE.BARR@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">SUSANNE.BARR@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>
North East England	Peter Clark	<a href="mailto:PETER.CLARK@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">PETER.CLARK@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>
	Phil Adams	<a href="mailto:PHIL.ADAMS@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">PHIL.ADAMS@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>
North West England	Mariangela Hankinson	<a href="mailto:MARIANGELA.HANKINSON@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">MARIANGELA.HANKINSON@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>
Central	Danielle O'Connor	<a href="mailto:DANIELLE.O'CONNOR@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">DANIELLE.O'CONNOR@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>
Wales	Lorraine Davies	<a href="mailto:LORRAINE.DAVIES1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">LORRAINE.DAVIES1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>
Southern	Mel Munro	<a href="mailto:MEL.MUNRO1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">MEL.MUNRO1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>
London and Home Counties	Denise Donovan	<a href="mailto:DENISE.DONOVAN1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK">DENISE.DONOVAN1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK</a>