

# Refugee Resettlement Factsheet 1 – Government policy and action<sup>1</sup>

## ***Phase1 and Phase2***

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015 the Prime Minister announced that the goal of resettling 1000 Syrian refugees by Christmas had been reached. This was by use of the existing Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, a relatively small-scale project which began in 2014, and was additional to the 'Gateway' programme, a well-established programme to take 750 refugees per year, usually people who have been displaced for more than 5 years.

That first 1000 was described by the government as Phase 1 of the programme. They are now consulting and planning for Phase 2. From April 2016, they intend to scale up the process so that 5,000 a year are resettled.

In addition to the resettlement programme, Syrians who reach Britain themselves can of course claim asylum. In the year ending September 2015, there were 2,204 Syrian asylum applications: the fourth largest nationality group.

## ***Who chooses who comes?***

The government is clear that all those brought over under its resettlement scheme will be identified in the countries around Syria by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They have a database of 7m people, of who 485,000 have been identified as having specific needs. No single males will be included.

The UK sets the criteria. It currently prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women, children and young people at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence, refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement countries.

Security and ID checks are carried out both by UNHCR and by the Home Office.

## ***Are all minority groups given fair treatment in the selection?***

UNHCR is careful to avoid any discriminatory action. It is well known that concentrating on the refugee camps in the region has led to some skewing towards the majority refugee population. Minorities such as Christians, or LGBTI people, are for a variety of reasons less likely to be in the camps. Work is going on, therefore, to improve outreach into other areas outside the camps.

## ***What preparation do they have before they come?***

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) conducts screening and health assessments and organises travel documents, visas, bags and travel arrangements. IOM escorts the people to be resettled and hands them over to the local authority in the UK. They run pre-departure cultural orientation for many of those coming to the UK.

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<sup>1</sup> These factsheets are about the programme to resettle some of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in this country. There is of course a much wider set of issues about asylum seekers, and about refugees who are in Europe, and massive help is going from the government and from charities to help displaced people in the Middle East and elsewhere. Churches are rightly getting involved in all of these issues.

## Refugee Resettlement Factsheet 2 – Making resettlement work

### Case study - Chelmsford Diocese – money and action

A total approaching £100,000 was raised before Christmas. It won't be used in place of government money, but probably for case workers and language sessions – the vital ingredients which parishes can't often find from their own resources, but will add real value to what local authorities can provide. It will also be used to build on and extend the expertise which is already there in the churches and to sponsor refugee families in the community.

The diocese is working with 'Fresh Beginnings', a voluntary organisation with a support centre in Colchester which offers advice and free English classes to refugees through north Essex; and with other projects. Fresh Beginnings, part of the Church of England 'DNA Network' church in Colchester, are the Home Office & Local Authority 'delivery partner' for resettling refugees in that area.

We are building good links with Colchester, Southend and other Essex local authorities, and have developed the relationships we have in the London boroughs we serve.

### Bodies working at national level

The **National Refugee Welcome Board** is the most significant national umbrella body for civil society organisations. It has been brought into being by Citizens UK, but has very wide representation. The chairs of the National Refugee Welcome Board are the Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Paul Butler; the executive chair Zrinka Bralo, CEO of Migrant and Refugees community forum, and Rabbi Danny Rich. Bishop Pat Lynch is leading for the Catholic Bishops' Conference, and other denominations are represented. Its website, Twitter account etc are found by #refugeeswelcome.

#refugeeswelcome has the names of 727 landlords offering properties, and 620 local campaigns. Also that 92 councils in England, Scotland and Wales have resettled Syrian refugees already or made firm commitments to do so.

**#forrefugees** (a different body) is 'a collective of churches, charities and community organisations working in partnership to welcome refugees'. It is run by the GoodFaith Partnership, linked to Chapel St<sup>2</sup>, and is part of the National Welcome Board. GoodFaith has called on all churches to take one refugee.

A number of other national organisations are taking a leading role, such as the Refugee Council and Refugee Action. See information about regional activity of some of these groups, below.

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<sup>2</sup> Chapel St Community Fund runs 7 community schools around the country, and a number of other community networks. It believes 'in the power of human relationships, in sharing hospitality with people of all faiths and none, and inviting the whole community to work towards the common good'.

**Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)** are making the refugee crisis a major focus of their work from now on. Their website has information and links to a number of resources, and more is to come.

## **What is the government's plan for integration?**

Local councils can opt into receiving Syrian refugees, either providing the service themselves or contracting out. The first year's funding is designed to meet all costs, then years two to five taper down for each person from £5,000 to £1,000. Many people have drawn attention to the risks if refugees are resettled in areas of social and economic deprivation, which has often been the case. Availability of jobs and several other factors can be adverse, especially as many such areas have already received many refugees and asylum applications.

*What will be provided for the resettled refugees?*

The government funding is designed to include integration support such as additional English language learning and social care. Health and education provision will be a statutory duty for the relevant agencies as for a British citizen.

Cultural awareness is needed both ways – refugees will need to understand basic British law and customs and how to access services in practice; while the welcoming community members will need to understand the culture shaping the outlook of the refugees.

### **Unaccompanied Minors –**

Home for Good is quite a young charity (launched 2013) to enable the churches to help meet the acute need for children to be adopted and fostered. It is led by Krish Kandiah. Coram (including Coram Children's Legal Centre) is the biggest national charity for adoption and fostering. Both of these are active in helping people to adopt or foster children entering the country as unaccompanied minors, with all the proper support and safeguards. The Government has said that it will be bringing in some unaccompanied refugee children who are in Europe at the moment. Details are awaited.

## Refugee Resettlement Factsheet 3 – Regional realities

The Refugee Council has many useful services, including an advice centre in Stratford, London. Especially in Greater London, it can give a lot of help about private rented accommodation, ways into employment, etc. Its information pack for refugees has many useful pointers - [http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/6009/Information\\_pack\\_for\\_refugees\\_Oct\\_2015.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/6009/Information_pack_for_refugees_Oct_2015.pdf)

In Merseyside and Greater Manchester, **Refugee Action** is taking a leading role in resettling refugees. Refugee Action is also in London, Bristol, and Birmingham

In Bradford, **Horton Housing** are doing well-established work.

### Case study - Yorkshire and Humberside

For the last 8 years, the Refugee Council has been working in Sheffield and Hull to resettle 1,950 refugees. Each refugee has a personal support plan. The aim is to promote independence through provision of interpreters, language learning, cultural awareness training and local orientation. They have found that volunteering opportunities arise from many of the refugees themselves, after they have been in the UK for 12 months. The workers also provide refugee awareness training for local organisations.

**Local authorities** – The Local Government Association has a LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group. Regionally, work is coordinated by the following bodies:

- East of England Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) – a part of the East of England Local Government Association
- North West RSMP – Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester.
- Migration Yorkshire covers Yorks and Humber.
- East Midlands SMP covers Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland.
- COSLA<sup>3</sup> SMP covers Scotland.
- The North East SMP covers Durham, Northumberland, Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear.
- The South West Migration Partnership Board covers Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Bristol, Dorset, Wiltshire. It includes the South West Forum for Asylum Seekers & Refugees.
- The South East Strategic Partnership for Migration covers Kent, Sussex, Bucks, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Berkshire, Hampshire
- Wales Strategic Migration Partnership
- London SMP, led by the GLA.

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<sup>3</sup> Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

# Refugee Resettlement Factsheet 4 – The local level

## Local communities welcoming refugees

The National Welcome Board helpfully sets out four priorities, which in brief are:

- Local residents, civil society and community organisation are the best people to offer a sustainable welcome;
- Voluntary activities are best seen as co-production with local councils and any contracted providers.
- It's about relationships and neighbourliness rather than bureaucratic programmes
- It is for the long term

There may well be one of the 85 local groups active in your area –check #refugeeswelcome. If so, don't reinvent the wheel – join them. Your diocese can probably support you in seeking to support refugees. For example, the London Diocese has appointed a full-time refugee response coordinator, Angela Afsal; while Canterbury diocese is using its 2015 Advent Appeal money to set up a post to work with refugees, especially in the Calais area.

### *1. Befriending and mentoring.*

Actual welcome packs will generally include household items (for washing and cleaning); toiletries (don't forget nappies and sanitary items, and dry food items. Presents from children in local schools are great.

Practical support e.g. setting up a bank account will be invaluable for many, helping to register with a doctor and dentist, introducing to local transport

Linking to related community organisations: some areas have an existing Syrian community; some have refugee community organisations. If they are there, find them and link with them. But let the refugees themselves set the priorities and the pace.

#### **Case study - Welcome Boxes**

This is a scheme which has run successfully in Derby for 6 years, and other churches are now being trained. It is sponsored by the Cinnamon Network. Cinnamon works through local churches to deliver community projects by a straightforward model of 'community franchising'. It began at the end of 2010. The point is 'Building friendships with Refugees', rather than just the boxes! The Westminster Catholic Diocese has picked up this scheme and asking for at least four people from a parish or deanery to get it going, providing free training. They are in partnership with the 'Upbeat Communities', Upbeat is a Derby-based charity which 'exists to help vulnerable refugees and migrants settle and begin to thrive in a new community'.

## **2. Language**

Interpretation and translation services will both be needed. Most Syrians understand Arabic. This is a plus, since local communities will generally include Arabic speakers. Links with local mosques are very helpful here.

Language learning is a key part of integration. This should be done by qualified ESOL teachers, but there are plenty of opportunities for mentoring and support on language learning.

## **3. Housing**

Local authorities may provide housing, but most are using private rented accommodation. Where there are existing partnerships (like Horton in Bradford), these are being used.

There is plenty of scope for churches to offer accommodation, provided that it is self-contained family accommodation available for more than short-term use. The Methodist Circuit in Ashford, Kent, has offered a house. Coventry Diocese has offered its former retreat house, Offa House, to be used as a short-term welcome centre for those being resettled.

## **4. Care and therapeutic support**

Most refugees are dealing with trauma. For many, trained and qualified therapists and counsellors, working in a proper professional structure of supervision and support, will be essential. But not for all.

## **5. Syrians helping Syrians.**

Scan-UK is a fairly new alliance of 15 associations and charities which bring together Syrians in various parts of the country. It includes the Syrian Association in Wales (SAIW).

## **6. Work**

On a 5-year humanitarian visa, the resettled refugees have the right to work. The same mentoring into employment principles apply as for anyone else – local links with employers, help with CV and interview preparation, accompanying to the local Jobcentre+.

## **7. Education**

Many refugees will have existing qualifications. Local FE colleges and other training institutions will be able to help on transferring or upgrading qualifications.

Local authorities will have the usual obligation to provide schooling, as for all those with refugee status. Schools have the opportunity through the Refugee Welcome Board to become a 'Refugee Welcome School'.

### **Case study – the Refugee Support Network**

The Refugee Support Network is a great provider of educational support for younger refugees. Their volunteers have mentored over 400 have signed up as educational mentors. They are at full stretch, and say that they don't currently have capacity to take on any more mentors. But they will take your details if you'd like to be on a waiting list! Donations of money will of course help them to expand and be able to take on more volunteers.

RSN also run a higher education programme, helping those with the potential to go to university. Catherine Gladwell is the founder and redirector. Citizens UK report that over 12 universities have offered more than £3.5m in scholarships for refugees.

# Refugee Resettlement Factsheet 5 – Changing the future

## Community Sponsorship

The Home Secretary said at her Party Conference last autumn that she was committed to a sponsorship scheme. This is a system for groups in the community to sponsor an individual refugee whom they will welcome into their own area, and provide comprehensive support for their resettlement. The government use their term ‘community sponsorship’ rather than ‘private sponsorship’, since they want genuine community groups rather than ad hoc groups of individuals. There are other well-established schemes in other countries, notably in Canada, where 250,000 refugees have been resettled in this way since 1978.

Many representations have been made to government that a sponsorship scheme should be additional to the 20,000 target by 2020; but they are adamant that any sponsored in this way will count towards the 20k.

Some pilot schemes are being planned at the moment, but details of these are not available, nor are details of the type of scheme that the government may consider.

## Campaigning

Many people, including the Archbishop of Canterbury as soon as the 20,000 figure was announced, have said that that number is too low. Many have called for 50,000 by end 2020. Some people feel that the best way to raise the figure is to throw the practical weight of local church communities behind resettlement work, so that as a nation we can reach the 20,000 figure and show that there is capacity to do even more.

In addition, many are throwing their weight behind the four principles set out in a letter from 350 lawyers last October. The four principles are: the UK should take a fair and proportionate share of refugees, safe routes to the UK should be established, safe routes within the EU should be established and there should be fair procedures to determine eligibility for international protection of refugees.

*In any campaigning, make use of the General Synod’s motion in November 2015:*

“That this Synod, recognising that almost 60 million individuals have been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict or generalised violence, a fifth of them because of the tragic conflict in Syria, and noting the compassionate response of British people to the suffering and needs of those displaced by conflict and other causes:

(a) urge parishes and dioceses to work closely with local authorities and other community partners, to provide practical and sustainable resources and structures for the resettlement of vulnerable refugees and to pray for all those seeking to address the causes as well as the symptoms of this crisis;

(b) welcome both the scale of the aid provided by Her Majesty’s Government to those suffering as a result of the conflict in Syria and its decision to resettle vulnerable Syrian refugees, while calling on it to increase the number significantly beyond its initial target of 20,000 over five years;

(c) call upon the Government to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure that vulnerability to religiously motivated persecution is taken into account when determining whom to receive into Britain;

(d) call upon the Government to work with international partners in Europe and elsewhere to help establish safe and legal routes to places of safety, including this country, for refugees who are vulnerable and at severe risk; and

(e) call upon the Government to take a fair and proportionate share of refugees now within the EU, particularly those with family already legally resident in the UK.”

### **Local councils**

One key bottleneck in the system is the fact that many councils have offered to resettle refugees (for example, half of those in Scotland have already taken refugees), but by no means all. If your Council has not offered, then you have all the usual ways of lobbying local councillors and council leaders to take as fair and generous a view as so many local authorities who have already stepped forward.