**Refugee Welcome Plan**

Each Local Refugee Welcome Committee (Local Committee) will need to create their own Refugee Welcome Plan. This is the document that sets out what you aim to do to welcome refugees and is the basis for relating to the local council and the National Refugee Welcome Board (National Board). Its purpose is to help ensure resettled refugees are properly welcomed, and that host communities have a positive experience of resettlement. It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a local authority, provider and host communities to help refugees rebuild their lives.

**Principles:** Each Local Committee will commit to:

* **Preparing their community for resettlement** – building an alliance of civil society prepared to call for resettlement in your area of some of the 20,000 Syrians the government has pledged to bring to the UK, engaging with councils and other agencies to get them on side, and planning the civil society contribution to resettlement and welcome.
* **Ensuring a welcome** – devising a local Welcome Plan, which mobilises the resources of your community to provide a warm, distinctive and long-lasting welcome to refugees once resettlement has been agreed.
* **Pressing for further resettlement and better treatment of others seeking sanctuary** - working to achieve an extension of resettlement to 10,000 places a year across the UK and arguing for greater justice for others seeking sanctuary. This will involve striking a public relationship with your local Council and MP, and may, at times, involve organising to create pressure so that local politicians appreciate the level of support that the community has for refugee welcome. Citizens UK Community Organisers are on hand to support your local organising effort.

The members of this committee agree to co-ordinate with the National Board and be in regular contact whether via fortnightly phone conferences, the Facebook page and directly with Citizens UK organisers.

The Local Refugee Welcome Plan is based on the following 4 principles:

1. That the best people to offer a positive, long-lasting sustainable welcome to refugees who arrive in a community are the local civil society and community organisations and the residents of that area.
2. That the plan, run by a Local Committee, will focus on voluntary contributions of welcome that complement the activities of the local statutory agencies and any of their contracted partners. Its focus is on the coproduction of refugee welcome between local councils, any contracted providers, and the host community.
3. That the emphasis should be on what civil society does well, and the importance of relationships and neighbourliness rather than bureaucratic programmes.
4. That the plan should be for the long term, in recognition that many of the most useful activities may take place well beyond the initial reception and orientation period.

Resettlement is provided by government contract. Local councils receive funding and can choose either to contract a local provider, like a charity or housing association, or try and provide the resettlement contract in house. Funding is available in full for the first year, central government has said some further funding will be available for the latter years but has not yet specified exactly what the deal will be. When a refugee is resettled with the agreement of the council the NHS and schools are then obliged to play their parts too.

Those who are resettled are given 5 years humanitarian leave to remain in the UK and so have full access to benefits and the right to work, and are given support from the provider. The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme – the programme under which people will be resettled – is modelled on international best practice and provides refugees with a comparatively strong package of support which lasts for one year. Many refugees report that one year is too little time and more widely the support has several common limitations which civil society groups, prepared with a Refugee Welcome Plan, are well positioned to address, particularly: language and translation, employment and education, befriending, mentoring and a good old British welcome.

The question of funding for councils beyond the first year primarily focuses on the financing of social care provision, as it is assumed many refugees will have substantial ongoing care needs. – the package of funded welcome and support for refugees only lasts the one year (A copy of the contract used will soon be uploaded to the Resources section of [www.refugees-welcome.org.uk](http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk) so you can see what councils commit to delivering and where best we can contribute). In many areas councils will be participating in refugee resettlement for the first time, in others councils will have substantial experience of other resettlement programmes – the most common being called the Gateway Programme.

**YOUR TEAM**

1. What is the name of your local group (and which town/city is it in)?
2. Have you registered with the National Refugee Welcome Board?

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| Core Committee member name | Organisation | Contact details (email and phone number) |
| Chair: |  |  |
| Co-Chair: |  |  |
| Secretary: |  |  |
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**THE LOCAL CONTEXT**

It is important that early on your team conducts an audit of what provision is currently lined up to support resettled refugees and works flexibly to co-produce the great welcome and long term support we want refugees to receive (case studies of complete Refugee Welcome Plans will soon be uploaded to the Resources section of [www.refugees-welcome.org.uk](http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk) so you can see how others are approaching it). Some key questions to investigate are:

* Has the local council committed to resettle refugees?
* If so are they committed to doing it in house or via a contracted provider?
* Has the local authority ever been involved in refugee resettlement before?
* What local groups already exist to support refugees in your local area and what are they planning?
* What elements of the below plan have the council/local provider already undertaken to delivering, which elements can best be provided by you and civil society?

One area groups may need support is learning about what will likely be considered culturally appropriate by resettled Syrian refugees. Wherever possible groups must act alongside and with the involvement of resettled refugees so they directly inform your work, you may also want to consult the cultural insights document soon to be uploaded to the Resources section of our site.

What are the key groups you would like to work with in the local refugee welcome?

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| Individual’s name | Organisation | Contact details (email and phone number) |
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What will successful Refugee Welcome look like to your Local Refugee Welcome Committee?

**ENSURING A WARM WELCOME AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**A warm welcome from the local community can make all the difference. This ranges from a welcome pack with the goods people need, through to specific low key welcome events, longer term opportunities to build relationships and practice English, and annual occasions to welcome new arrivals.

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| **ITEM** | **TASK** | **PERSON RESPONSIBLE** |
| **Planning the Refugee Welcome Pack when people arrive:** when refugees are first resettled and moved in to a property often they will lack basic household goods. Household items (washing up liquid, soap), toiletries (bath products, nappies) and dry goods (salt, sugar, tea, coffee) are most useful. See the guidance note for specific goods likely to be of use. Welcome packs could also include welcome letters from community members, or presents from children in local schools as a personal touch. | What household goods can you secure, in what quantities for welcome packs:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | HOUSEHOLD GOOD PROVIDED | POTENTIAL SOURCE | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |
| **Planning ‘meet the community’ events:** when people first arrive, it can be disorientating, so large public events with the media can be overwhelming.  Low key, friendly meetings, particularly to connect new arrivals to local services, are better. It will often be sensible to speak to the specific case workers supporting the refugees so they can help make initial contact and discern what activities refugees would like to see take place. | Types of events planned could include welcome meals in a local community centre or someone’s home, small group hosting evenings, neighbourhood walks that include useful local resources such as libraries and GP surgeries, showing refugees around the local community to understand what is happening where, putting on specific events for children.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | TYPE OF EVENT | Who could support or be involved? | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | | PERSON RESPONSIBLE: |
| **Planning longer term community support**: those resettled will need friends and champions. What longer term support will local people commit to giving?  What support is available from within their community of worship?  Key areas include:   * **Translation e.g. helping to read letters, or attending appointments – local mosques and universities may be rich in Arabic speakers** * **Language classes, wherever possible finding support from qualified ESOL teachers.** * **Conversation classes or informal English support.** * **Befriending.** * **Orientation with local services e.g. setting up a bank account, registering with a GP.** * **Mentoring to achieve goals, e.g. improve their CV.** | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Name | What have they committed to? |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | PERSON RESPONSIBLE: |
| **Opportunities for integration:** Many of those who are resettled will be extremely vulnerable. They will need opportunities to find support in the long term and chances to integrate and build relationships with others in a safe way.  You might want to consider some of those listed, or think of your own.  Identify what groups and opportunities already exist locally. These may or may not be suitable or adaptable to the needs of resettled refugees.  Wherever possible these should be instigated with and alongside the refugees, rather than set up on their behalf. | **\*Drop-in sessions** – a place and time where refugees know they can gather if they wish either just to socialise or interact, or to get queries answered. In many urban centres such facilities exist for asylum seekers and others already.  **\*After school groups -** these could be aligned with existing groups but with elements specific to the needs of the refugee children  **\*Women’s groups –** there can be particular issues facing women among resettled refugee groups and these forums provide a safe space for them to discuss things  **\*Refugee Community Organisations –** as well as building social bridges (out to the wider community) refugees also often want to build social bonds (strengthening links with others from their country or region – refugee and non-refugee).  **\*Prayer groups** – while newly arrived refugees are often welcomed into churches, mosques or other places of worship in their area, they sometimes also take comfort and gain strength from forming their own groups, perhaps attached to existing congregations  **\*Community choirs** – the first group of resettled refugees in the UK, a group of Liberians who arrived in Sheffield in 2004, decided to form a choir which proved highly successful  **\*Football teams** - another group of resettled refugees set up their own football team and starting playing in the local leagues  What opportunities for integration can you connect with, adapt or suggest for refugees to instigate: | PERSON RESPONSIBLE: |

**EDUCATION**

Getting their education on track is a crucial part of helping young people rebuild their lives. This will involve pinning down school places and accessing higher education. Older people might need to access further education to enable them to use their skills in the UK.

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| **ITEM** | **TASK** | **PERSON RESPONSIBLE** |
| **Signing up ‘Refugee Welcome’ School**: help identify schools places for refugee children. Schools have an obligation to support children but helping ensure they do a good job of welcoming and helping them settle is important – ESOL provision and sensitising the other children before refugees arrive are key priorities. Use the Refugee Welcome Schools Pledge: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/schools/> | Names of schools you might engage:  1)  2)  3)  4)  5)  Names of schools committed:  1)  2)  3)  4)  5) |  |
| **Involving your local university and securing scholarships:** Over a dozen universities have offered more than £3.5 million in scholarships for refugees so far. This can help them rebuild their lives and gain qualifications. Which universities can you persuade? | Universities we might engage:  1)  2)  3)  4)  Visit here for more info <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/universities/>. For best practice universities can be encouraged to copy <http://article26.hkf.org.uk/policy-resources/education-for-all> |  |
| **Further education:** Advanced English and specialist courses to transfer qualifications could help refugees develop their prospects. What is available locally? | Further education or specialist training colleges we might engage:  1)  2)  3) |  |

**EMPLOYMENT**

Those resettled to the UK are granted 5 year humanitarian visas. They have full rights to work and will sometimes be highly qualified. Given the financial pressures on local authorities helping people find work quickly can make a big difference to whether your area can resettle more people.

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| **ITEM** | | **TASK** | **PERSON RESPONSIBLE** |
| **Finding work:**   1. Helping refugees to find employment through your networks 2. Assisting with drawing up CVs or preparing for interviews 3. Arranging work experience and apprenticeships | Which employers do you have relationships with that you think may be interested to see if they could hire one of the new refugees? Which employers could you reach out to for an introduction?  1)  2)  3)  4)  5)  6)  7)  8)  CV Workshop: how can you help to interpret their experience into what would be useful in the UK?  Interview and assessment preparation: can you help coach them for an interview, or lend them a smart suit to wear?  Which companies/organisations could offer work experience or apprenticeships? | |  |
| **Job Centres** | Resettled refugees who are able to work or want to claim Job Seekers Allowance may need to connect to your local job centres.  The processes at job centres can be extremely complex, to help it’s recommended groups:   1. Try to ensure translation support is available for refugees 2. Accompany refugees to appointments at the job centre 3. Ensure that job centres are approached before the arrival of refugees in an area by the local council 4. In case of difficulty that groups help connect refugees with the local Citizens Advice Bureau | |  |

**BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

Much of the British public is extremely concerned about the levels of immigration in the UK. Particularly following the attacks in Paris many people will be concerned about resettlement, even though many of those seeking protection are fleeing exactly the same type of violence seen recently in France. It is important both for communities and refugees that we proactively engage to help people understand the both the urgent need for and the benefits of welcoming refugees.

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| **ITEM** | | **TASK** | **PERSON RESPONSIBLE** |
| **Securing initial support**: to secure a community’s initial support we need to:   1. Make the case for why resettlement is important 2. Show that resettlement won’t have strong negative affects on the local community 3. Convince the local council to sign up   A strong tool to do this is through a public action, where the community can gather in support of Refugees Welcome.  This can also be the moment that will convince a local council to commit.  Public statements of welcome by local institutions (schools, universities, faith organisation and voluntary organisations) have a big impact - both on local community attitudes and the local council. Can you convince your local institutions to make public statements of welcome? How will you communicate this? | What will you do?  Where and when will the action be?  Who are the local civil society, business and political leaders who support this campaign? Will they make public statements of welcome?  Civil society:          Business:          Political (local councillors and MPs):          How will you ensure that a large number of people, from  diverse backgrounds and communities, come to support it?  Are there local groups with influence who are sceptical about resettling refugees? How will you reach out to them to make the case for resettlement? Will they come to see the good will that others are showing?  Who is the decision-maker that has the power in the Council to join the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (generally the Leader of the Council)? How will you make sure that they attend?  How will you make sure that the media join you?  What ‘story’ do you want to tell about why all of these people support this campaign? | |  |
| **Communicating the welcome:** local press can play an important role in community responses. Local communities are often anxious that new arrivals will put pressure on local services: civil society pledges can show that local services won’t be damaged by resettlement.  How are you going to communicate the local public support and political support for resettlement? | How will you publicise the commitments that local people and institutions have made to welcome refugees?  How will you celebrate the Council when they decide to join the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme?  How will you celebrate your MP when they have made a commitment? | |  |
| **Maintaining community involvement:** good resettlement needs long-term community engagement**.** | How will you make sure that your Local Committee is included in the ‘welcome’ of refugees from the outset? | |  |
| **Regular Refugee Welcome Event:** welcoming is an ongoing process. A yearly event in the community is a chance to celebrate the work that the local community has done in welcome refugees. | What would it be? E.g. you could organise a refugee week celebration with a ’reunion’ of welcomed refugee families.  Who do you need to meet in the community to begin putting into the local ‘calendar’ for 2017? | |  |

**A WORD ON TIMESCALES**

The support provided by local authorities and their contracted partners to refugees will taper very sharply and very substantially after one year. This plan is currently designed to focus on the short and medium term needs of those resettled, but it can form a useful basis for thinking about what and how to scale community support as council engagement declines. We will soon be producing specific guidance on helping people transition out of the first year’s support.