

Community Sponsorship Scheme

Tips for Community Sponsorship Groups

This practice brief provides key tips and useful advice for volunteers working on the Community Sponsorship (CS). The brief uses learning from the formative evaluation of the scheme which included over 100 interviews with volunteers and refugees.

Attracting and Supporting Volunteers

- Use social media, local newsletters and community notice boards to promote CS.
- Ask friends and family members to spread the word.
- Organise public CS talks to promote the scheme and dispel myths about refugees.
- Be clear about the nature of CS volunteering and the skills and time commitment required.
- Explain the difference that CS volunteers make to refugee families and their local community.
- Promote the benefits of CS volunteering to volunteers.
- Connect volunteers with others in more established groups to share experiences and learning.
- Develop a safeguarding policy for volunteers, which includes policies for avoiding burnout.

Welcoming the family to the UK

- Form a small welcome committee to receive the family in the airport.
- Keep the group of volunteers supporting the family small in the first weeks.
- Introduce those core volunteers to the family as soon as they arrive.
- Explain the role of each volunteer so the refugees know who to turn to for help.
- Provide as much interpretation support as you can in the first weeks.

Helping Language Learning

- Adhere labels with the names of objects around refugees' home in English (i.e. fridge, door, window, etc.)
- Organise collective cooking activities talking through the names of ingredients.
- Create simple memory games such as Simon Says with basic words that the family can play together and with volunteers.
- Borrow materials from schools with special needs department.
- Adapt online materials so that they work for the refugee family.
- Use translation apps or telephone interpretation if you cannot source enough interpretation locally.
- Produce a list of basic phrases in English with Arabic translations.
- Do not rely too heavily on ESOL classes – one to one support achieves much faster results.
- Contact charities with expertise teaching English to refugees for example: [Students Action for Refugees](#)

Reducing Social Isolation

- Help the sponsored family to create a network with families from nearby groups by making introductions and running occasional events.
- Identify Arabic speaking volunteers in the area and ask for help especially around the arrival period.
- Introduce the family to members of the local community and support them to participate in local clubs and social activities.
- Ensure the family have good access to internet so they can stay in touch with friends and family around the world.

Benefits System

Working together with others towards a shared goal has enabled volunteers to:

- Meet the manager of the local Jobcentre Plus before the family arrive and tell them about CS so they can share with their staff.
- Many groups have struggled to access a bank account for refugees. You can open a bank account easily with Monzo:
- <https://monzo.com/>
- Benefits system training online at Turn2Us: <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>
- Calculator online by the government <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>
- Citizens Advice Benefits <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/>

Increasing Refugee Employability

- Manage refugees' expectations to avoid disappointment – getting work is not easy and will take time.
- Prioritise language learning in the first few months in the UK.
- Identify volunteering opportunities which will enable refugees to use their existing skills in a UK context.
- Once language skills are adequate help refugees to enrol on courses that will enable them to gain a UK qualification.
- Look at converting refugees' higher education qualifications using NARIC <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>.
- In rural areas where public transport is poor support refugees to take their driving test and with lifts to and from volunteering and work opportunities.
- Build refugees' self-confidence by asking them to teach volunteers some of their skills (i.e. cooking, carpentry).
- Identify charities that can help provide training and support to increase employability <https://breaking-barriers.co.uk/the-cause/refugee-employment-crisis/>.

Managing Cultural Differences

- Be prepared for some major cultural differences especially around gender relations and approaches to socialising.
- Actively explain life in the UK to refugees – how British people socialise, what to expect at the doctors, the importance of pets to British people etc.
- Differences in childrearing practices are often a source of concern for refugees – explain the British approach covering issues around school attendance, discipline and leaving children home alone.
- Reassure families they can ask volunteers any question about life in the UK.
- Encourage families to explain their culture to volunteers and support volunteers to understand and respect refugee values and traditions.

Communicating CS to the Local Population

- Do not assume that local people know what a refugee is.
- Train your volunteers to explain the nature of CS and refugees to local people who are not involved in the scheme.
- Invite your MP and local authority staff to events and activities asking them to help promote CS in the broader community.
- Organise events to raise awareness about refugees in schools and other settings.
- Contribute updates about CS positive outcomes to local newsletters.
- Liaise with the local press and share good news stories for publication.
- Contribute good news stories to local Facebook pages and other social media.

Making an application to CSS

For guidance, advice and support to help you to establish a Community Sponsorship group consult:

<http://training-resetuk.org/toolkit/making-an-application>

For more information contact:

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