

SPONSOR REFUGEES

Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees

INTRODUCTORY GUIDE FOR REGISTERED CHARITIES ACTING AS 'LEAD SPONSORS' OF COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP GROUPS

Brief background on community sponsorship

Community Sponsorship (CS) is a new way in which local community groups can take on direct responsibility for resettling a refugee family in their neighbourhood.

It is currently part of the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) and is only open to refugees from the Syrian conflict.

CS groups are entirely made up of volunteers who are expected to fundraise, find housing, identify interpreters, enroll the refugees on English classes, and play the leading role in assisting them to feel welcome, orientate themselves and integrate meaningfully.

Full information on how the scheme operates can be found here

<http://www.sponsorrefugees.org/faq>

Requirement to be a registered charity

A key requirement for a CS group to be accepted as a sponsor by the Home Office is that they are:

- Already a registered charity or community interest company (CIC)
- They become a registered charity or CIC
- They link up with an existing registered charity or CIC which will act as their 'Lead Sponsor'

This requirement reflects the fact that CS is a significant commitment for a volunteer community group and the Home Office wants to be sure that every group is able to fulfil its responsibilities to the refugee family.

Being a 'Lead Sponsor'

The first thing to make clear, is that being a Lead Sponsor does not mean directing the work of the CS group day to day. The Trustees, directors and staff of any registered charity that

acts as a Lead Sponsor should not be doing community sponsorship themselves. The role of the Lead Sponsor is to act as a mentor, guide and guarantor of the CS group.

Where a community sponsorship goes well, the oversight role of the Lead Sponsor is likely to be fairly light touch. The extent of support the Lead Sponsor offers to the volunteers in the CS group largely depends on the relationship in each particular circumstance.

The main 'risk factor' for a Lead Sponsor comes into play in the unlikely event that the community sponsorship breaks down or the CS group folds. In this circumstance, the Lead Sponsor would take on a 'firefighting' role, liaising with the Home Office and Local Authority to ensure that the refugee family continued to be supported.

Given the above, it is very important that the Lead Sponsor organization has a high level of confidence in and a strong relationship with the CS group.

Responsibilities of CS group and Lead Sponsor

The following is a broad break-down of the split in responsibilities between the CS group itself and its Lead Sponsor.

CS group

- Form core group and sub-groups
- Raise Funds (at least £9,000 for a two-parent family)
- Budget and financial reporting
- Administration of scheme and running of CS group
- Source and secure housing
- Obtain Local Authority consent
- Draft and deliver resettlement plan
- Draw up safeguarding policy
- Provide interpreting services
- Draw up volunteer guides
- Welcome family at airport and settle them into new home
- Orientation in the local community
- Source and organize English language sessions
- Registration for benefits, schools, GP etc
- Assist with finding education and employment openings

- Plan and implement 'exit strategy' so that refugee family are independent as soon as possible

Lead Sponsor

- Overall legal responsibility
- Review and approve application, resettlement plan and budget
- Provide support and guidance
- Oversee safeguarding arrangements
- Provide financial arrangements (including keeping the CS group's funds in a ring-fenced account)
- Some liaison with the Home Office

Memorandum of Understanding

A Lead Sponsor and CS group will want to formalize its partnership through a written MOU. The contents and extent of this document will vary with each sponsorship.

For more information, contact:

Communitysponsorship@citizensuk.org