

# 2018 Impact Report



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January to December 2018



**Nasc**  
Migrant & Refugee Rights

**nascireland.org**  
 **021 427 3594**

## A Word from our Chair – *Othman Al Dawamenah*

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I am delighted to have the pleasure to introduce the Nasc Impact Report 2018 for the final time as my term on the Nasc Board has come to an end. I joined the Nasc Board in 2013 and I have had the privilege to serve two terms as the Chair of the Board. In my years serving on Nasc's board, I have had the opportunity to see the organisation's work and our impact grow and deepen. Over my term on the Board Nasc's legal service alone has worked with and supported 5,500 individuals. The demand for accessible, free and expert legal information continues to grow and I am delighted that Nasc has been able to secure funding to meet that demand.

In addition to the legal service, during my years on the board Nasc has expanded our work and established a number of important and innovative programmes including our Connect Project which works with vulnerable children and young people from a migrant background, our Gateway Project which provides employment supports to refugee women and most recently our work on Refugee Community Sponsorship.

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In addition to our direct work and the Nasc programmes we have consistently been strong and effective and credible voice both locally here in Cork and nationally for positive effective change to our immigration, protection and reception systems.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Nasc staff team and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone I have has the pleasure of working with over the last 5 years. Your compassion, humanity and dedication to the work is unparalleled, and I thank you for all you do and have done.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our funders without whom none of this work would have been possible. In particular I would like to thank our long-standing supporters The Tomar Trust, HSE, Musgraves, Tusla, Saint Stephens Green Trust, the Department of Justice and Equality, the European Commission through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020, Pobal, The Ireland Funds, The Community Foundation of Ireland, Cork City Council and the EU Funds Unit. I would also like to thank all our individual donors, who help to keep our work going.

I would also like to thank all of the interns and volunteers who have given freely of their time; without you we would not have been able to achieve as much as we do. Last but not least, I wish to thank my fellow Board members for their work throughout 2018 and I would like to welcome Dr Fiona Donson as the new Chair of Nasc.

The future will no doubt hold challenges, but whatever we face, Nasc will develop and grow and will continue to be there to protect rights of our migrant and ethnic minority communities.

## A Word from our CEO – *Fiona Finn*

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I am proud to say that in terms of our advocacy work and impact 2018 was one of our most successful years to date. In late 2017 Nasc launched our Safe Passage campaign in response to the ongoing global refugee crisis. Our campaign called for the introduction of a Humanitarian Visa Programme and the establishment of a Refugee Community Sponsorship Programme to complement Ireland's resettlement programme. We were delighted that these two programmes came about in 2018 and we would like to thank our fellow NGO partners, the UNHCR, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme and our Canadian colleagues who worked with us to make this a reality. Work is currently ongoing on the finalisation of the Community Sponsorship Programme and we look forward to welcoming our first family to Dunshaughlin Co. Meath in 2019

We also advanced our work on the creation of a humane reception system in Ireland and our work on the development of National Standards for Direct Provision with our partners, is progressing well. 2018 also heralded in the right to work for asylum seekers in Ireland, and the adoption of the Receptions Conditions Directive which places Direct Provision on a statutory footing for the first time. These are very real progressive steps that will greatly improve the lives of those seeking protection in Ireland. We realise however, that there is a lot more to do and our focus for 2019 will be to develop and implement clear alternatives to our current Direct Provision system.

The Nasc Legal Service was extremely busy, we supported 1180 individual clients and delivered almost 4000 interventions. Refugee and non-refugee family reunification topped the poll once again as the main issue presenting in the clinics. The erosion of family reunification rights remained of huge concern to refugee families and to Nasc. We continue to work with Senator Colette Kelleher and our NGO partners to restore family reunification rights through the International Protection (Family Reunification) (Amendment) Bill 2017 which is progressing through the Dail.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our incredible team of staff, interns and volunteers who go above and beyond to deliver incredible lifechanging work. All of our successful outcomes can be attributed to you.

I would also like to thank the Nasc Board who give freely of their time and expertise. Good governance is the foundations upon which Nasc will build and grow. Thank you too to all our funders and partners both in the city and across the country. A special thank you must go to the Dominican Friars for the use of their wonderful premises in Ferry Lane. The Novitiate House was our home for five years. Nasc has now moved to a new city centre office in Paul Street in Cork and we are eternally grateful to the Dioceses of Cork and Ross for the use of this wonderful, iconic Cork building.

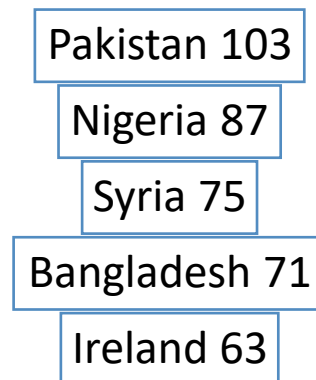
A final word of thanks must go to the migrant communities that we work with, some of whom have taken a brave stance to share their stories publicly to highlight both the challenges they face and their successes and achievements in making Ireland their home.

## Update from our Legal Service

2018 was another busy and successful year for Nasc's legal service. The legal service team of Fiona Hurley, Majo Rivas and Mark Durning were supported by our wonderful interns and students throughout the year including Natalia McDonald, Deirdre O' Grady, Ellen McCarthy, Rachel Reynolds, Hailey O' Shea, Dearbhla de Barra, Grace Egan and Sinead Walsh. We would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who contributed to the working of our service.

We would like to acknowledge the funding provided by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund 2014 – 2020 (AMIF), for our 'Integrating Cork' project which is co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund 2014 – 2020 and is supported by the Department of Justice and Equality. The second Legal Service project 'Nasc Immigrant Integration Initiative' is funded through the National Integration Funding Programme and is supported by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and the Department of Justice and Equality.

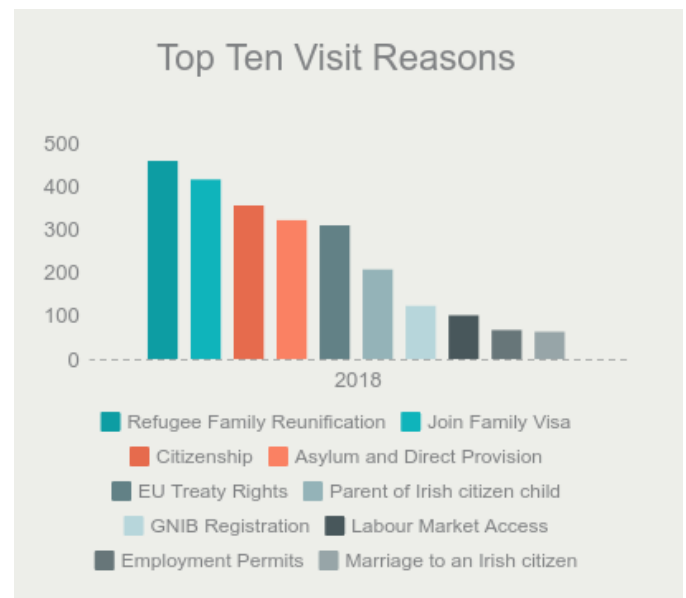
Nasc's legal service supported **1180** unique clients in 2018 with **3910** interventions (actions/consultations). **1533** consultations were provided through our free Walk-In service. **614** of the clients were first time clients of the service. Nasc's clients came from **105** countries across the world. **727** of our clients identified as male, **452** as female and **1** as other.



### Demographics

### Key Areas of Work

**Family reunification** continued to be the top reason (458 interventions) for visiting the clinics. **161** of these consultations were delivered through the Walk-In Service. Although the numbers of beneficiaries of international protection eligible for family reunification fell in 2018, there remained a significant demand for information on reunification rights through our Walk-In Service with many once-off consultations delivered to refugees who were not



eligible for family reunification. **23** refugee families were reunited by Nasc in 2018. Our legal team provided assistance with liaising with the Irish Red Cross Restoring Family Links Unit, UNHCR Ireland and the IOM in order to facilitate the travel of family members granted.



**'Join Family' visas** were the second highest reason (**415** interventions) for visiting the clinics. In light of the restrictions on refugee family reunification, this high number of consultations was to be expected.

**355** interventions were delivered on **Citizenship and Naturalisation** with **159** of those consultations delivered through the Walk-In Service. Many of the refugees who were resettled in Cork city and county under the Irish Refugee and Protection Programme (IRPP) became eligible to apply for naturalisation in the third and fourth quarters of 2018 and Nasc provided hands-on support including dedicated Citizenship Information Sessions to this cohort of refugees.

There were **321 interventions** including **161** consultations through the Walk-In Service on issues relating to **direct provision and asylum**. This represents an increase on the previous year and issues raised varied from lack of access to cooking facilities to involuntary transfers. Additionally, there were **101 interventions** delivered on employment and the Labour Market Access permits. Nasc continued to provide outreach to all five of the Direct Provision centres located in Cork City and County.

## Key Developments

There were some positive new developments in 2018. Chief amongst these was Ireland adopting the **recast Reception Conditions Directive** which provided for the right to work for international protection applicants and

placed the reception conditions in direct provision on a statutory footing for the first time. This led to an increase in numbers of asylum seekers accessing our service for information about their reception conditions and the right to work. The State also introduced a once-off special scheme for **undocumented students** in October 2018. This scheme was open between October 2018 and January 2019. Nasc continue to work with former students who applied under this scheme.

The State also introduced the **International Humanitarian Admission Programme (IHAP)**. The IHAP programme was established to provide humanitarian admission to Ireland for **530** eligible family members of Irish citizens and those with protection status in Ireland. This prompted huge interest when the first call for proposals opened in May 2018. Nasc provided information to over **120** interested people and directly assisted **44** people with their applications **14** of those applications were granted or partially granted. This represents **17%** of the 82 total applications granted nationally. IHAP 2 opened in December 2018 and Nasc provided information to **81** interested people.

## Key Networks

Nasc's Legal Service provided information and support to domestic violence agencies, refuges, homeless services, social workers, community organisations and citizens information centres working with people of a migrant or ethnic minority background across the country. Locally Nasc joined an inter-agency group of organisations working with victims of DSGBV in Cork City and county. Nasc's legal service remained a part of key national networks including the Immigration Information Network hosted by the INIS (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Network) and the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). Nasc continued to be an active participant in meetings of the European Migration Network and PICUM.



*"Thanks for all of your help in getting me 'legit'. (I couldn't have done it without you!) Thanks for everything."*

*"Thank you very much for the service you provided to me. I wasn't expecting the result of the application so soon. I am really surprised. I can say you have hand of Angel for me. You were so cooperative, fantastic behaviour with kindness to me. To say thank you is not enough for you..."*



## Update from our Campaigns & Communications Team

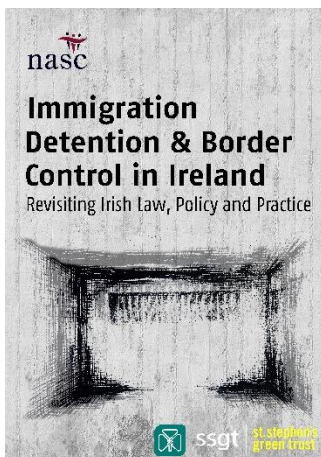
2017 was a very successful year for Nasc from a campaigning and communications perspective. The Campaigns and Communications team was managed by Campaigns and Communications Manager Jennifer DeWan who was ably assisted by interns and volunteers. We would like to specially thank Emily Cuniffe and Maria Bateson for their work on the 'Immigration Detention & Border Control in Ireland' report.

In 2017, we worked closely with a range of NGOs, community groups, statutory agencies, civil servants, politicians and policymakers in calling for reforms in such areas as the refugee crisis; the asylum process and direct provision and family reunification.

### Publications

Nasc published two reports in 2018. The first of these, **'A Family Belongs Together: Refugees' experiences of Family Reunification in Ireland'**, was written by written by Róisín Hinds on behalf of Oxfam Ireland, Nasc and IRC. The report looks at the human consequences of the change in legislation under the International Protection Act, 2015 which significantly restricted family reunification opportunities for refugees. The report contains a short analysis of the current policy context and then focuses on the voices of those affected by the legislation.

*"When I went past immigration, I was not concentrating. I saw my husband, I saw my husband. I was so happy, very happy, really. Because this is life and this is a dream. A dream of us to stay together in the same place and make a beautiful family."*  
[A Family Belongs Together]



Nasc's second report, **Immigration Detention and Border Control in Ireland: Revisiting Irish Law, Policy and Practice** was based on two years of research, which included interviews with migrants and asylum seekers detained due to refusals of leave to land, as well as those detained as protection applicants and pending deportation. The report was launched on Tuesday 13th March 2018. IPRT Executive Director Deirdre Malone spoke at the launch, highlighting the inappropriate nature of prison for immigration detention. The report takes as its starting point Mark Kelly's seminal research on the area of immigration related detention in Ireland, which was first published in 2005. The report was published in advance of Ireland opening its first purpose-built immigration detention centre at Dublin Airport in 2018.

### Campaigns

#### Family Reunification Bill

Nasc continued to work closely with the Civil Engagement Group as well as our partners Oxfam Ireland and the Irish Refugee Council to progress the International Protection (Family Reunification) (Amendment) Bill

2017. This Bill seeks to rectify the damage caused to refugee family reunification rights under the International Protection Act, 2015. The Bill was passed in the Seanad with majority support in March 2018. The Bill passed second stage in the Dail and was referred to Select Committee in December 2018.

### **Safe Passage Success - Community Sponsorship and IHAP**

Towards the end of 2017, the Government announced not only would it be introducing a new family-linked humanitarian admission programme, but they would also be developing a community sponsorship programme. These were both key asks within Nasc's Safe Passage Campaign. Nasc worked together with the Irish Refugee Council, Irish Red Cross, UNHCR Ireland and senior officials in the Irish Refugee and Protection Programme (IRPP) to build a community sponsorship programme for Ireland.



We were delighted to work with Wicklow Syria Appeal to welcome the Al Sulaiman family to Wicklow. The family of 9 arrived in Dublin airport on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018. This was the first project of its kind, established in the spirit



of community sponsorship. With Nasc's assistance Wicklow Syria Appeal agreed to sponsor a refugee family from Syria. The pioneering group arranged accommodation and have been supporting the family since their arrival. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the Irish Red Cross and the IOM in bringing the Al Sulaiman family to Ireland. This pioneering project was developed by Nasc as a pilot for Community Sponsorship. The family's arrival and subsequent

integration into life in Wicklow was the subject of a feature piece, *"From Syria to Wicklow: A desperate family, an Irish Welcome"* and short video by award-winning journalists Sorcha Pollak and Kathleen Harris in the Irish Times.

## **Asylum System & Direct Provision**

Nasc continued to campaign for improve the protection process, calling for improved decision making and an end to long processing times. Nasc worked closely with the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children to submit complaints regarding conditions in direct provision centres.

Nasc continued to engage with RIA in the development of national standards for direct provision. The National Standards for accommodation offered to people in the protection process ("National Standards") will apply to the living conditions and services provided to residents within accommodation centres and to all service providers contracted by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) to operate and manage accommodation

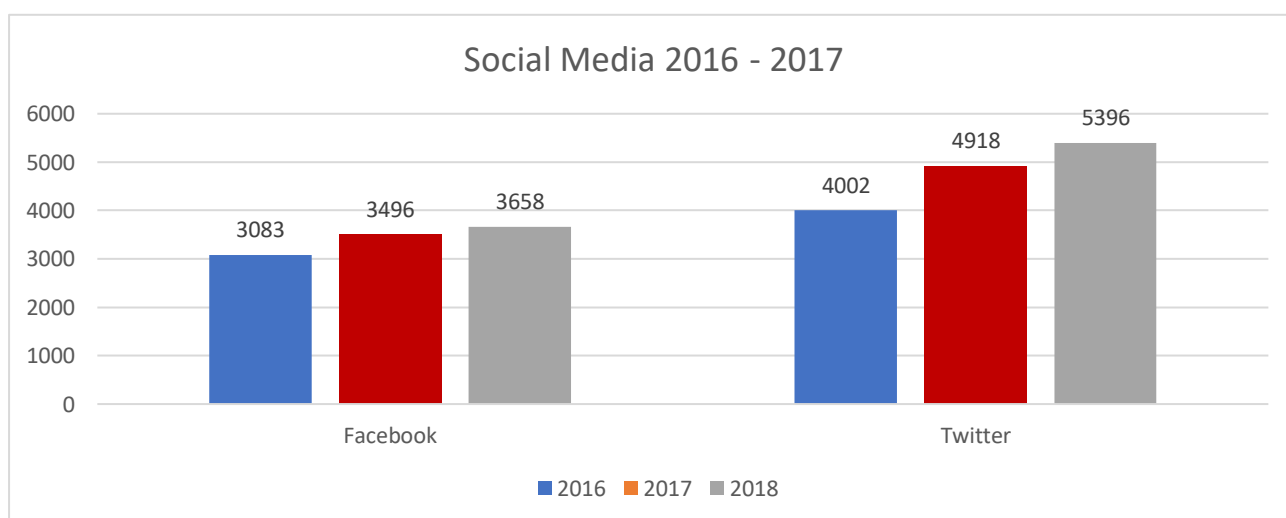
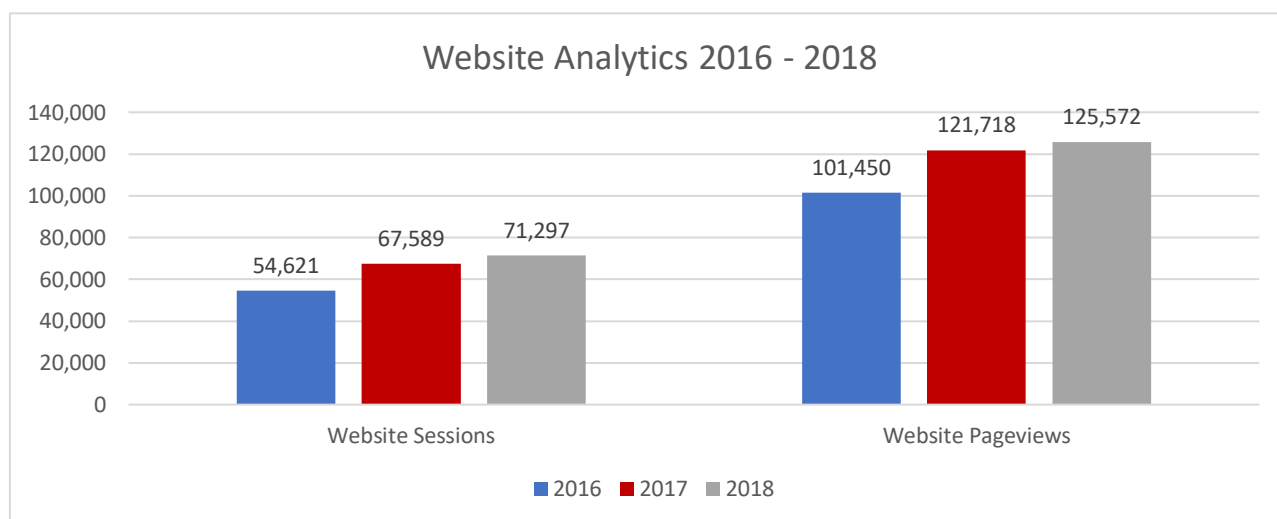


centres. The Standards Advisory Group, of which Nasc was a member, continued to meet throughout 2018 and Draft National Standards were published for public consultation in August 2018. It is expected that the National Standards will be signed off on by the Minister for Justice and Equality in 2019.

## Communications

Nasc's media presence continues to remain strong and increase the profile of the organisation and showcasing our work in national and local media and through social media.

We continue to engage with our followers, supporters, service users and other interested parties through our website and social media presence. Nasc began the process of developing a new website and brand in 2018 and we'd like to thank Piquant for their work. Both the website and our new logo will be launched in 2019.



## Connect Project

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The Connect project is a social work programme that provides specialised advice and support for young refugees and asylum seekers aged 14-23 years. We work with young people living in Direct Provision centres, migrants in Care and Aftercare services and those who have reunited with their refugee families in Ireland. This project began in January 2018 with the support of Tusla, Child and Family Agency, St Stephens Green Trust and the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI). The Connect Project is managed by social worker, Susan Mackey who was assisted by Connect Project Worker Nael Souad.

Our main activities include:

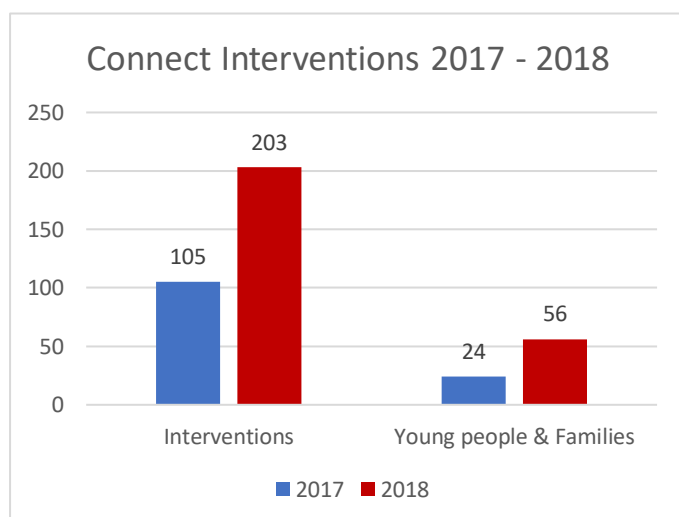
- a.) One-to-one advice and advocacy on several issues impacting the lives of young asylum seekers and refugees – including their immigration needs, access to education and work, safeguarding and prevention of abuse, harm, poverty, homelessness and destitution
- b.) Supporting access and achievement in education through assistance with course fees, learning materials, IT, transport and English language support
- c.) Prevention of social isolation through strengthened links to the community and providing access to integration activities
- d.) Supporting good mental health outcomes for young people through providing access to wellbeing and mental health supports.

*In 2018 the Connect Project has provided 203 interventions in total to 56 young people and their families.*

Asylum seeking and refugee young people face a complexity of issues including social isolation, language barriers, mental health issues and immigration-related barriers. This can place them at greater risk of abuse, poverty and exploitation. As stated in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, our national youth policy (2014-2020), it can also impede their educational and health outcomes.

This is a relationship-based, collaborative project and involves the active participation of young people through peer-to-peer support and project input. We also incorporate the voices and feedback of young people to continually improve our service. Moreover, the project supports capacity building and knowledge sharing with social and community workers to improve responses to young refugees and asylum seekers.

Over the last year, the Connect project increased its capacity through the support of the Dept. of Children and Youth Affairs QCBI Innovation fund. This enabled us to scale up our mentorship and peer-to-peer support work leading to greater social inclusion and integration outcomes for young asylum seekers and refugees. In 2018, we provided 203 interventions in total to 56 young people and their families. These interventions included information and advocacy to support their immigration needs, access to education, accommodation, financial support and links to mental health and wellbeing services. Successful outcomes for young people in this project include a secure immigration status, greater access to education and employment opportunities, prevention of homelessness, poverty and abuse, enhanced mental health and wellbeing, and increased participation in social and community life.



# Community Sponsorship

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Community Sponsorship is an alternative refugee resettlement pathway, whereby communities across Ireland are enabled to directly support and welcome refugees coming to Ireland for the first time. It is a joint initiative of the Department of Justice and Equality's Irish Refugee Protection Programme and NGO and civil society organisations, including the UNHCR, Irish Red Cross, Irish Refugee Council and Nasc.

In 2018, we saw huge progress in the establishment of Community Sponsorship Ireland. Most significantly, the Government's commitment to introducing Community Sponsorship in Ireland was a watershed moment and a success for Nasc following our Safe Passage campaign.

## Government Commitment

Following the success of the Wicklow Syria Appeal, in summer 2018 we were pleased to see the Government formally commit to pursuing Community Sponsorship and a year-long 'development phase', from autumn 2018-19, announced. During this period, the programme is to be trialled with the aim of welcoming around 10 households or families resettled from Jordan and Lebanon to communities nationwide. The programme has received notable support from Minister David Stanton, who wants to see Cork leading the way in Community Sponsorship.

As part of the programme, participating communities source accommodation, receive training and provide financial and non-financial supports in order to assist newcomer refugee families and households to adjust to a new life in Ireland. Places such as Canada and the UK have seen considerable positive integration outcomes as a result of private sponsorship, and through 2018 we have been learning from and working alongside partners in both jurisdictions to shape a model that works in the Irish context.

Nasc has received funding from the Department of Justice and Equality to continue our work on Community Sponsorship, which includes provision for a part-time Community Sponsorship project worker. Nasc recruited Maria Bateson to this position and from January 2019, she will be working on designing and delivering training and assisting and recruiting further Community Sponsorship Groups.

## Other Communities

Inspired by the initiative in Wicklow, this year a community in Co Meath contacted Nasc with the goal of welcoming a family to Ireland via Community Sponsorship. We began working with the group in the summer to train, support and prepare them for the Community Sponsorship process. They are now at an advanced stage in their preparations and expect to



welcome a family of three in early 2019. Once the family arrive, this community will officially be the first to welcome a family to Ireland under the Community Sponsorship Ireland programme.

Towards the end of 2018, three other prospective Community Sponsorship groups – in East Cork and West Waterford – emerged in response to Minister David Stanton’s call for participants. All three are supported by local development companies SECAD and Waterford Leader Partnership, respectively. As part of our role, we will train and provide ancillary supports to the leader groups so that they can guide and support the communities under their remit to the best of their abilities.

We look forward to 2019, when we expect the Community Sponsorship programme to be officially launched and for new communities to come on board in response. This launch is predicated on the finalisation of policy and support documents for communities, which Nasc will continue to play a key role in developing alongside partners. In 2019, a monitoring and evaluation process is expected to be tendered by the Department of Justice and Equality, which will provide a much-needed learning opportunity for everyone engaged in the programme. In the coming year, we also look forward to engaging with other stakeholders in the development of a National Support Organisation – a central managing body for Community Sponsorship in Ireland – which we believe to be crucial to scaling and growing the Community Sponsorship programme. Nasc is central to consultations around this and will continue to play a significant role in the construction of this body. We greatly look forward to welcoming many more households to Ireland under Community Sponsorship in the coming year.



## Gateway to Employment Project

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The Gateway to Employment Programme assists refugee women in pursuing education and employment opportunities. The project seeks to equalise the basis on which refugee women access and participate in the labour market and Irish life. We particularly seek to work with isolated women from new communities who often encounter difficulties with inclusion, integration, and accessing services in Cork.

The Gateway Project aims to provide a holistic service to women by identifying and addressing their needs for the programme, so that they may have the best possible opportunity to attend, engage and successfully complete the course. The project includes the provision of an intensive English course, one to one supports and personal mentoring, as well as assistance in pursuing further education, volunteering opportunities and/or employment. Childcare is sought and paid for participants who have children, and travel costs to and from classes are also catered for.

*A total of 25 women have actively participated in the course.*

In addition to the course, individual mentoring sessions are run with the majority of the women attending the course. This mentoring has included developing individual action plans, confidence building, assistance in applying to Further Education Colleges and assistance with applications for jobs.

The project includes the provision of an intensive English course, computer classes, personal mentoring, and supports in pursuing further education, volunteering opportunities and/or employment. A total of 25 women actively participated in the project in 2018, which ran from March to October '18. By the end of the project, 16 participants were enrolled in accredited and non-accredited courses including Childcare, Horticulture, Biotechnology, Healthcare Assistant, General Learning and English classes, while 6 participants were engaged in work experience opportunities



