

Community Sponsorship Resource: the Community Sponsorship 'Journey'

- (1) **Read around and get in touch.** If you are interested in forming or joining a group in your local area, get in touch with your nearest Regional Support Organisation. Nasc is the RSO for the Cork/Kerry area. We can point you in the right direction for information and materials and may also be able to let you know about any other current groups in your local area.
- (2) **Form your group.** Approach members of your community who might be interested in welcoming a refugee family under Community Sponsorship and/or advertise in your local area. Groups tend to comprise a core committee of about 10-15 people with wider support from the community, but this varies.
- (3) **Register and meet with your local Regional Support Organisation.** Once you have appointed a core group who are committed to welcoming a refugee family under Community Sponsorship, contact your nearest Regional Support Organisation, who will meet with you, answer any questions and help with the next steps of your application. Your Regional Support Organisation will support your group through every step of the journey. Which organisation you will work with depends on your region.
- (4) **Submit your initial application form.** This is the first form that groups need to submit. This form registers your interest as a group and provides some cursory details about how you came together, group membership* and how you intend to fundraise. You will need to submit this to your Regional Support Organisation who will review it. If they are happy with it, they will submit it to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (herein IRPP) for approval.

*Note that new group members can join as you progress as a group, even if they are not included in your initial application form.
- (5) **Set up a bank account and start fundraising.** Once you have been approved as a group, you can begin fundraising and making other preparations. Groups are required to raise a minimum of €10,000 of which €2,000 can be in-kind donations, prior to a family's arrival.
- (6) **Begin training (ongoing through preparation period).** Your Regional Support Organisation delivers comprehensive training to all group members. This training is mandatory and covers topics ranging from organising your group to welcoming the refugee family to your community to cultural competency. It is delivered in separate modules suited to the group's stage of preparation.
- (7) **Fulfil group safeguarding requirements.** All group members must be Garda Vetted and complete Tusla's "Introduction to Children First" online learning module. In addition, all groups need to create a group Child Safeguarding Policy, with which the RSO will

help.

- (8) **Make preparations for a family's arrival and complete settlement plan.** The second application form you will need to complete as a group is your Settlement Plan. This form details the arrangements you have made to welcome a family to your community, including practical things like ensuring that there are school places for children and space in the local GP's books, to housing arrangements; as well as 'soft' supports including how you will help the family to get to know the local area and feel welcome in their new home.
- (9) **Find a house suitable for a family.** Groups need to find own-door accommodation suitable for a family in their local area that will be available for a period of 24 months from the point of the family's arrival. This is generally rented on the private market through HAP. When you have done this, you can complete the Housing Section of your Settlement Plan for the IRPP to review. After you have submitted this, they will check to make sure that the house is suitable.
- (10) **Submit your final application.** This includes your completed Settlement Plan, Safeguarding Policy and Tusla Online Learning Certificates for all group members. Your Regional Support Organisation will review this and work with you to ensure that it contains all necessary details. Once complete, they will send it to the IRPP for review and approval.
- (11) **Make final preparations and make contact with the matched family.** If you have been approved as a group and provided there is a family ready to come to Ireland via Community Sponsorship who would be suitable for your group and area, the IRPP will match you with a family in Lebanon or Jordan and provide you with an estimated date of arrival. Groups make initial contact with the family before they arrive through letters and phone calls facilitated by the IRPP.
- (12) **Welcome and support the family.** Community Sponsorship Groups usually greet the family at the airport (in normal circumstances) and commit to supporting newcomer families coming in under the programme for a minimum period of 18 months - although we find that it is rarely as neat as this and communities and families tend to become friends. The ultimate goal is to support the family to get settled and become self-sufficient in their new home.