

Community Sponsorship

A Guide for Community Sponsorship Groups
2021



10 Steps to Community Sponsorship Pre-arrival

1 GATHER



FUNDRAISE 2



3 LEARN



ORGANISE 4



5 FIND A HOME



10 Steps to Community Sponsorship

Arrival and beyond

6 GET READY



WELCOME **7**



8 ORIENTATE



SETTLE IN **9**



10 THINK AHEAD



1 GATHER



Do you want to start a Community Sponsorship Group? Or join a group in your area?

Every Community Sponsor Group comes together in a different way. Whether it's through a local sports club, the local parish or simply flyering your neighbourhood, there is no right or wrong way to go about it. One of the great things about Community Sponsorship is that anyone can start a group, no matter who you are.

The easiest way to start is by contacting your nearest Regional Support Organisation. Nasc is a Regional Support Organisation based in Cork, for example. Your Regional Support Organisation can link you up with existing groups, give you tips on recruiting and let you know if there are any other groups in your area.

How other groups did it



The St Luke's group formed after a couple of friends flyered their neighbourhood & organised a meeting



The Kinsale group got together after members of the local parish community and a network of young parents banded together



The Carrigaline group gathered after the local Catholic Parish Priest and Church of Ireland Reverend reached out to members of their communities to form an ecumenical group

2 FUNDRAISE



The basic requirement for fundraising is that, before you can welcome a family, your group needs to **raise €10,000. €2,000 of this can be in-kind donations.** In-kind donations might be someone offering free services like private counselling, driving lessons or house renovations.

There are a couple of reasons to fundraise. Firstly, the money will help cover additional expenses for the family. These costs might include things like interpretation services, dental and other healthcare supports, childminding and more.

Fundraising also helps to bring the group and community together as you work together towards a shared goal, and helps to spread the word about what you're doing.

Fundraising Tips

Set up a bank account with at least two signatories. This will usually be a personal account (rather than an account for a charity or registered organisation)

Use the internet: active social media accounts and a GoFundMe can quickly raise money online

Share your bank statements at the start of every meeting

Make a clear policy for how your funds will be used, how the family can access them etc.

Have a couple of people in the group dedicated to fundraising efforts; and a finance officer

How other groups did it



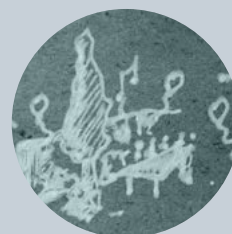
Community Fêtes



House Concerts



Card Tournaments



Garden Parties



Skill Shares



As a trainer, I try to make sure that Community Sponsorship Groups are prepared to welcome and support a refugee family as they make a new life in Ireland.

3 LEARN



Training & Information

Every Community Sponsorship Group has to take part in training before being approved to welcome a family. The training aims to prepare groups for Community Sponsorship; to encourage them to think about their role and also the experience of a refugee family resettled to Ireland; and to make sure they are generally informed about the programme.

The group's Regional Support Organisation delivers the training. It generally takes **two full day sessions** to cover all the material.

The training is not exhaustive. Instead, it's a springboard into further learning and discussion. The programme will inevitably raise many questions and the training cannot hope to answer all of them. Nor is it a one-stop shop on how to 'do Community Sponsorship right'.

Every group and family is different; and the learning process is ongoing for all involved.

Community Sponsorship is multi-layered - it covers a lot of different skills, ranging from understanding how to apply for State supports to finding the balance between supporting and empowering a newcomer household. The training attempts to cover all of this; while also responding to groups' needs.

In fact, because it covers so much, we deliver it in two separate sessions. The first part is for groups who are new to Community Sponsorship and is delivered just after a group submits their Settlement Plan. It covers things like how Community Sponsorship works, how to organise your group, how to manage boundaries, and so on. We deliver the second section later in the process, once groups have got to grips with the Settlement Plan; it covers things like Child Safeguarding requirements, cultural competency, unconscious bias and how to write a settlement plan.

In reality, the formal training is only a small part of the Community Sponsorship learning curve. It sets up a space to get groups thinking, to challenge themselves, and to get curious. But it's only a framework to guide sponsors as they navigate the various challenges & hurdles they may encounter along the way.

- Maria

Nasc Community Sponsorship Project Worker



4 ORGANISE



The Application Process

As well as fundraising and finding a house, groups need to complete an application process to be approved by the IRPP. When you submit your documents for the application your Regional Support Organisation (e.g. Nasc) will first check them and recommend any changes needed. They will send them to the IRPP, who will then review the documents and either approve or ask for you to edit it.

What documents does a group have to submit to be approved (and when?)

A. Initial application form

This is the first form you send in to your Regional Support Organisation. It is the form that details your group and how you formed; and how you plan to fundraise. Once this has been approved you will get a formal letter from the IRPP informing you that your group is approved as a Community Sponsorship Group.

When? Once the group is formed and early in process.

B. Settlement Plan

This is the document that outlines how your group plans to welcome and support a refugee household resettled to your community. It contains things like information about your local schools, doctor's and language supports.

When? Groups complete their settlement plans late in the application process, when they have fulfilled the other asks. *However*, we encourage groups to send in their settlement plan before they find a house, so that once they find a house they are otherwise ready to go.

C. Child Safeguarding Policy

As your volunteer group is likely to be working with a family with children, you will need to have policies and procedures on how to create a safe environment for children and prevent deliberate harm or abuse to the children. This will be your Child Safeguarding Policy.

The RSO will help you to develop this and will be able to guide you to some online resources and training materials.

Tusla have an excellent free Children First Learning Programme which takes about 1.5 hours. All group members need to complete this. The training can be completed in stages and covers how to recognise and report abuse, the role of mandated persons and designated liaison person and the responsibilities of organisations working with children to safeguard children.

Garda Vetting

Anyone in the group who will have direct contact with the family should be “garda vetted” once your initial application is approved. This is a straightforward process which your Regional Support Organisation will help with.

1. The RSO will send you a vetting application form. Complete this form and return it to the RSO.
2. You'll be sent an email with a secure link to the online vetting form
3. You must complete the form in a single session. You cannot save and exit part way through the form. If you do, this will cancel your entire application and you will have to go back to Step 1.

Tip: Having a record doesn't automatically disqualify someone from volunteering or joining a group e.g. failing to pay a fine doesn't mean that you would not be an appropriate person to work with children or adults.

5 FIND A HOME



Each Community Sponsorship Group must find a home for a family. This may be an apartment or house that is own-door and ready for a family to move into.

It's a good idea to secure a house once the other parts of the application are complete, so that there isn't too much of a gap between finding the house and the family's arrival.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

HAP is a State payment that covers some of the cost of private rent. The HAP rate depends on where the property is; and how much tenants have to pay is proportional to their income. See citizensinformation.ie

What makes a property suitable?

✓ **Accessibility**

The house needs to be close to amenities and facilities, ideally within walking distance and, at a minimum, public transport

✓ **Affordability**

If renting the property, the cost of rent needs to fit within HAP limits, or not greatly exceed them (see below); and that the family can feasibly afford it following the sponsorship period

✓ **Availability**

The house needs to be available to a family for a minimum period of 24 months following their arrival. In the case of rental properties, this means a tenancy agreement that secures the property for 24 months.

6 GET READY



Pre-Arrival Practicalities

So, you've submitted your application and you've been approved to welcome a family to your community. Well done! What happens next?

The IRPP will let you know when your application has been approved. They will match your group with a family based on your settlement plan (e.g. size of accommodation, available supports etc.) The IRPP will also give you an estimated arrival date.

Based on this, your group can make last-minute preparations, such as arranging for an interpreter to come to the airport, setting up appointments with services, arranging a call with the family and so on.

Sponsor Stories

“

Solidifying friendships among our community even before the family arrived was fantastic. We've all worked together... I think it's great. To offer a family the opportunity to join us in a lovely community here is great...

There's a huge benefit on all sides in showing a bit of kindness

There's a moral duty to do it. I particularly feel it in relation to the Irish that left this country because I feel very close to them. I know the history of my own family and the influence they've had abroad. The contribution the Irish community have made in America, and still do. There's a huge benefit on all sides in showing a bit of humanity and a bit of kindness to people who are in need.

- Marguerite, Sponsor

”



Meeting the family at the airport

When they arrive in Ireland, the family will fly into Dublin Airport. Groups generally send a small number of people to meet and greet the family the airport and organise transport to bring them down to their new home.



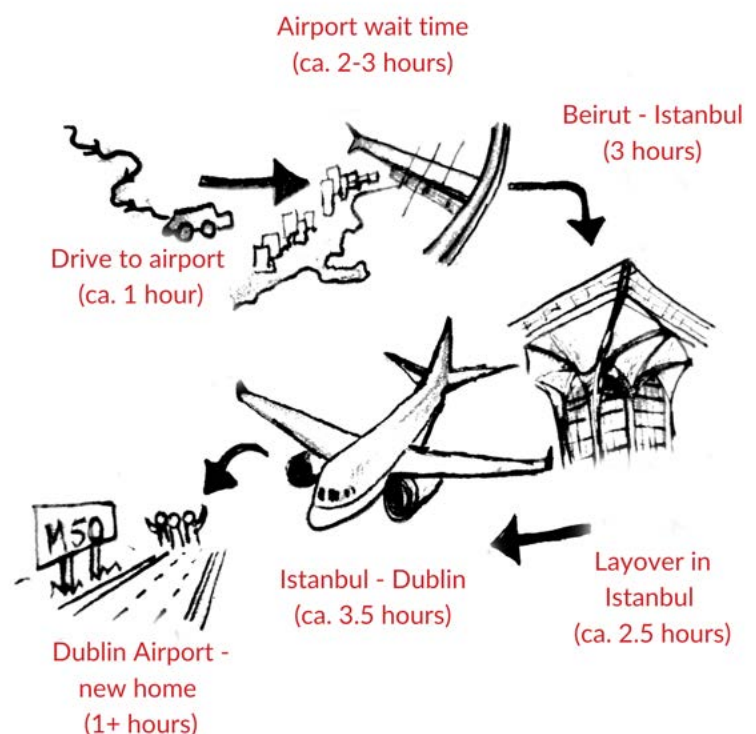
The family are likely to have a lot of luggage with them when they arrive. So it's a good idea to bring a car or van that can fit extra baggage

It's a good idea to have someone at the airport who can speak the family's language (usually Arabic) and translate.

The Family's Journey to Ireland

The journey from Lebanon or Jordan to Ireland is a long one. Keep this in mind when greeting the household. Bring snacks and water; possibly pillows for the car so they can sleep if they want to; and, for example, if the family has a baby, things like the milk formula they use can be really helpful at the airport.

Also, remember how overwhelming this experience is and how new everything might be to the family; so try to create a sense of calm.



Above: an example of a typical itinerary arranged by the IOM for refugees as they travel from Lebanon to Ireland

8 ORIENTATE



Post-Arrival Practicalities

When the family arrive, they will need to apply and register for different entitlements so that they can access social protection, healthcare and other State supports.

The sooner the family applies for these things, the sooner they can access all of the services they need and move forward with their life in Ireland.



Move at the Family's Pace

While it's good to get a head start, be mindful of the family's needs and chat with them about what they want. The family will have been travelling for many hours and just made a seismic move to Ireland. They may well want a some respite before jumping into paperwork.

Sponsor Stories

What does a newly-arrived family need to apply for?

Refugees in Ireland are fully entitled to work, access education and the same State supports as any normally-habitual Irish resident. There are a few things that the family needs to register and apply for once they arrive, including PPS numbers, medical cards, State benefits, GP registration and so on.

As a sponsor group, **you are in a great position to help the family work through these applications.**

“

We knocked on all the doors and the shops and that's something that might be helpful to other community groups looking for accommodation. If you go down any Irish town in the evening you'll see that not every shop has someone living above it.

- Susie, Sponsor

”

9 SETTLE IN



Once the family have settled in a little more, there are many ways that groups can offer social and more informal supports.

Language supports

Every resettled refugee's level of English will be different; some people won't speak any English whereas others may be fluent.

You may need to source professional interpreters for medical or other appointments that are confidential. The HSE can sometimes offer interpretation support for medical appointments.

For less formal interpretation, see if you have any contacts who speak the family's first language and who could translate. See what English lessons are available locally. Informal conversational English is also great - meet for coffee, go shopping, it all helps!

Orientation supports

People moving to Ireland for the first time will be used to different prices, currencies and shopping options. So an introduction to the relative costs of things, where is the best shop to buy bread or meat, where the halal shops are, how much the Euro is worth... all of this can be really helpful when the family is first figuring out their household budget.

Networks and social supports

One of the things that groups are so well placed to do is to link up families with their own networks, any clubs or societies they are part of or other activities in their area, depending on the family's interests and wishes. All of this is central to giving the family the tools to feel at home from the outset.

Language Tips

Marwa's recommended phrases to learn in Arabic

marhaba: Hello

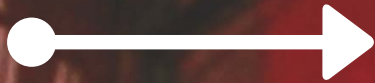
shukraan: Thank you

sabah alkhayr: Good morning

'ahlaan wasahlaan: You're welcome

There are lots of free and affordable resources online to help you learn Arabic, too.

10 PLAN AHEAD



Think ahead / exit plan

There are a few things that are worth planning for at the beginning of the process, and that you can discuss on an ongoing basis with the family. Here are some prompts:

Accommodation: the family's rental accommodation may only be guaranteed for two years, so it's worth thinking about the options that would be available to the family after that period.

Independence: one of the key aims of community sponsorship is for newcomers become self-sufficient and independent in their new home. Groups are perfectly placed to help the family to do this by connecting them with driving lessons (necessary to obtain an Irish driving licence), English language supports, orientation supports, vocational courses, CV supports and so on.

Sponsor Stories

Citizenship: The refugee family may wish to apply to become Irish citizens in future. Your RSO should be able to direct you to an organisation that can help the family when it's time to apply. Generally, adult refugees are eligible to apply for citizenship after 3 years in Ireland.

Tip: Keeping old proofs of address can be very important for a citizenship application. Let the family know that they should retain utility bills, leases, bank statements which can all act as proofs of address so that they're ready to go when it's time to apply for citizenship.

“

We can all look and be horrified by things, but this is where you can actually do something about it and be more proactive.

- Nic, Sponsor

”

What Sponsors Say

"I want to be able to be of some small assistance to a family who, through no fault of their own, find themselves as refugees. I can't imagine the hurt and the pain that must be caused to force a family to up roots and leave the country of their birth in such conditions and I just want to be able to help in some small way." - **Rowland, Community Sponsor**



"As for the fundraising, I really dreaded it at the beginning but it turned out to be really fun; coming up with different ideas and different things. And people supporting you along the way."
- **Jane, Community Sponsor**

"I hope we can give the family a feeling of belonging. I think everyone needs to feel like they belong somewhere, and I hope that our community is where this family feel like they can belong."
- **Maureen, Community Sponsor**



"It's well worth doing. I would say that in a way we have a duty to do it... for me it's a question of not so much the warm feeling you get from helping somebody else, which you do. It is that as human beings we have an absolute obligation to do it"
- **Ithel, Community Sponsor**

"I expected a certain level of support but... it was like pushing an open door and I didn't expect that, I thought it was going to be a lot harder. The community support was just phenomenal. So I was really proud of the town and the people I know..."-

- Susie, Community Sponsor



"The family now call this town their home and it's great to see that ... And I remember asking them how they felt about being here and they were just so absolutely astounded by the welcome they'd got."

- Seán, Community Sponsor

"From the very beginning I was dismayed at ... seeing people fleeing from difficult situations... the Mediterranean experience and the boats... So I was very interested in how we could help people to escape from these terrors and help them resettle into a good life

- Joan, Community Sponsor



"You should do it to help somebody in trouble, who's going through a situation that is beyond their control. It's not something that they caused, it's something bigger than them. So I think it's just showing humanity to other people.

- Nicola, Community Sponsor

I arrived in Ireland by Community Sponsorship Scheme, which allowed me to integrate within the community, build friendships, take part, and enhance my language. It was a great feeling when I knew that a group of locals was looking forward to welcoming me in the country. And they will help and support me to start a new life. Now, the welcome group became like my family. They visit me, and I visit them from time to time. I do not feel I am alone; they are always beside me, helping me to understand the roles and the system how it works. They assisted me in getting the official papers that I could not do without them.

- Marwa
Newcomer to Ireland
via Community
Sponsorship

We had a lovely meal the other evening (with the newcomer family) and I found that very emotional and very moving because the whole group was there and it was like a very successful conclusion to a programme that we'd been involved in. (The family) invited us, they prepared the food... it was a lovely moment in our support of them. And you just felt you were blessed in the fact that they have come to us and have added to the community here and that they were... happy to do that.

- Ithel
Community Sponsor



Notes:



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

This project is co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020 and is supported by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.