# C:\Users\ku60651\Dropbox\Kingston Community Refugee Sponsorship\8 Forms, Templates and Stationery\Logo and Strapline\E-Mail Signature.jpg

# **Community Sponsorship – an introductory explanation**

## What is this scheme?

The government is encouraging communities to sponsor families selected by the UNHCR and approved by the Home Office to resettle in the UK. The Home Office Document “Community Sponsorship - Guidance for prospective sponsors” describes the scheme.

Sponsors accept major responsibilities for the resettled family – finding and preparing suitable accommodation for them, befriending them and supporting them for two years whilst they integrate into the local community. The resettled family have refugee status and “right to remain” as soon as they arrive. This entitles them to UK benefits, e.g. housing benefit, and gives them the right to work. Where their resettlement encounters costs, e.g. English language classes, use of interpreters, initial spending money before benefits begin, etc. then the sponsoring group covers these costs.

## Is this the Syrian families resettlement scheme (SVPRS)?

The SVPRS scheme, which was launched in 2014 and has since been re-labelled VPRS, has many similar features. Under VPRS a local authority arranges for the support of a resettled family and central government covers most of the costs. In the Community Sponsorship scheme a sponsoring charity raises funds to cover the costs.

## Why have a new scheme?

The Community Sponsorship scheme is modelled on a highly successful programme that the Canadian government has run for several decades. Community sponsorship leads to much faster settling in and integration of the new families.

## Who’s going to do this community sponsorship scheme in Kingston?

A group of Kingston faith bodies has collaborated to launch a charity called Kingston Community Refugee Sponsorship (KCRS). KCRS will be applying to the Home Office for permission to resettle families in the Kingston area. KCRS plans to collaborate with **Refugee Action Kingston** who have in-depth experience of supporting refugees.

## What’s the process with “the authorities”?

**Kingston Council** will have a role in approving a sponsor organisation and its proposals. The proposed accommodation will be checked by the local council to make sure it’s up to standard.

The **Home Office** will evaluate KCRS’s preparedness on the basis of a written plan submitted to them.

**UNHCR** will help match a family to the proposed accommodation.

## What are the commitments of the sponsor?

The sponsor commits to find and prepare housing and support the incoming family from arrival onwards. The Home Office requires that the sponsor raises an initial fund of £9000 towards the likely costs. The sponsor’s written plan must demonstrate that they can access relevant skills – e.g. interpreting, either by paying for this or by having competent volunteers.

## How long do the responsibilities of the sponsor last?

The sponsor undertakes to find housing for 2 years and to provide general support for at least one year. Experience from the existing VPRS scheme suggests that some level of support may be required for longer than one year until the family are able to support themselves.

## How can faith communities and other organisations become involved?

* Become an organisational member of KCRS (£100 per annum)
* Encourage community members to take out individual KCRS membership (£10 per annum)
* Encourage community members to offer time and expertise and donations
* Help to locate accommodation, especially where the landlord is willing to take housing benefit levels of rent
* Help with fund-raising

How can individuals become involved?

* Contact KCRS at [KingstonCRS@gmail.com](mailto:KingstonCRS@gmail.com) to
  + Become a member of KCRS (£10 per annum)
  + Offer skills and expertise
  + Pledge donations
* Encourage friends, family, neighbours to do the same
* Encourage your church, mosque, synagogue, school, college, employer to get involved

## How can we get more information?

* Google “Community Sponsorship”
* Check out the KCRS website
* Contact KCRS at [KingstonCRS@gmail.com](mailto:KingstonCRS@gmail.com) to arrange to talk to a KCRS trustee