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The Canadian Private Sponsorship of Syrian Refugees:

An example for the UK



**INTERNATIONAL
OBSERVATORY**
HUMAN RIGHTS

18 January 2018

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Executive Summary:

Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSR), recently hailed as a model for the world by the head of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), allows organisations and groups of citizens to provide the financial, logistical and emotional support needed to resettle refugees.



The Private Sponsorship of Refugees was pioneered in 1978 in response to the mass exodus of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians following the Vietnam War. The programme settled modest numbers of refugees in the ensuing years, but in September 2015, the image of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi lying dead face down on a Turkish beach, reignited the Canadian public to act. One month later in October 2015, Justin Trudeau, Canada's newly elected Prime Minister, fulfilled an election promise to increase the number of Syrians resettled to Canada. By January 2017, Canada has resettled over 40,000 Syrian refugees, of which nearly half were privately sponsored.¹

Since the launch of the resettlement scheme almost 40 years ago, 300,000 privately sponsored refugees have been settled in Canada, and the programme changed the way Canadians view their role in their country's resettlement programme.

Canada was not alone in joining the international efforts to support the Syrian people, including those who fled the conflict to seek refuge in neighboring countries.

Due to the unprecedented humanitarian costs of the Syrian Civil War, the UK government decided in 2014 to undertake the largest resettlement programme in the country's history. Prime Minister David Cameron announced the UK would offer resettlement for 20,000 Syrian refugees between 2015 and 2020 under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. This figure was later increased to 23,000 following the introduction of an additional legal pathway called the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.

The reformation of the UK refugee programme did not stop here. Based on the Canadian model of PSR, the UK also introduced the Community Sponsorship scheme in July 2016, giving local communities the opportunity to assume greater responsibility in the global refugee crisis by taking up a leading role in resettling refugee families into their neighbourhood.

¹ #WelcomeRefugees: Key figures, Government of Canada, Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees/key-figures.html>

The Syrian Crisis



The Syrian conflict has been named one of the worst humanitarian disasters in recent history. The ongoing multi-sided armed conflict caused the death and disappearance of about 465,000 people since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011.² By November 2017, according to Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview (Syria HNO), 13.1 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, 5.3 million of whom were children and the number of internally displaced people reached 6.1 million.³ UNHCR estimated that the number of Syrian refugees seeking safety in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and beyond was over 5.4 million.⁴

Public response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Both Canadian and UK communities and charities have looked for various ways to provide support and safety to Syrians. This is in response to the widespread media attention on Syrian refugees living in poor conditions and endangering their lives by fleeing conflict through attempts to cross the Mediterranean sea.

When the first wave of Syrian refugees arrived in Canada in 2015, many Canadians donated clothing, furniture, and other items to help support private sponsorship efforts. In some cases, landlords donated apartments in their buildings or vacant suites in homes within the community. By contrast, many government-assisted refugees (those supported entirely by the Canadian government vs. private sponsorship groups) were initially housed in hotels or repurposed government buildings, often increasing isolation and making integration into the community more difficult.

The public response in the UK was also exceptional. Millions of people have donated money and supplies, individuals have offered their free time for relief efforts in refugee camps and several local organisations have launched campaigns requesting local councils to welcome more refugees. According to a survey conducted across the country by Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) in September 2015, nearly one in three people (31%) have in some way contributed to the ongoing refugee crisis. One in eight people (over 6.1 million) have donated money to an organisation in support of the refugees and over 1.8 million people (1 in 14) were ready to offer accommodation in their homes to refugees⁵. Another poll, published by Amnesty in May 2016 showed the British public's overwhelming support towards refugees. The results of this survey reveal that three quarters of the British public support the resettlement of refugees in their neighbourhood or home.⁶

² Syrian war monitor says 465,000 killed in six years of fighting, Reuters, 13 March 2017, Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-casualties/syrian-war-monitor-says-465000-killed-in-six-years-of-fighting-idUSKBN16K1Q1>

³ 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview. Available at: <https://hno-syria.org/#home>

⁴ Syria Emergency, UNHCR, Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/syria-emergency.html>

⁵ Millions in the UK have lent support to refugees in the past month – CAF research shows, Charities and Aid Foundation, Available at: <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/media-office/millions-in-the-uk-have-lent-support-to-refugees-in-the-past-month-caf-research-shows>

⁶ New poll shows overwhelming support in UK for refugees, Amnesty International UK, Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/new-poll-shows-overwhelming-support-uk-refugees>

In an attempt to call on the UK government to accomplish much more and expand its refugee relief efforts, thousands of people, including MPs and celebrities joined the marches organised in support of refugees in Central London in September 2015 and 2016.⁷ This was a clear demonstration of the eagerness of ordinary citizens to have a say in the current refugee crisis and find ways to participate in refugee protection.



Thousands attend the Solidarity with Refugees March in London
Source: The Guardian⁸

When the refugee crisis went from bad to worse in 2015, practitioners were tasked to travel around the UK to prepare teams for the arrival of refugees. During this process, it has become apparent that civil society and local communities were interested in participating in an initiative similar to the Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees programme and therefore willing to welcome refugees themselves.

⁷ Khomami Nadia & Johnston Chris, Thousands join Solidarity with Refugees rally in London, The Guardian, 12 Sept 2015, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/sep/12/london-rally-solidarity-with-refugees> and Slawson Nicola, Thousands march in London during pro-refugee demonstration, The Guardian, 17 Sept 2016, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/17/thousands-march-in-refugees-welcome-rally-in-london>

⁸ Khomami Nadia and Johnston Chris, Thousands join Solidarity with Refugees rally in London, The Guardian, 12 Sept 2015, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/sep/12/london-rally-solidarity-with-refugees>

Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR)



Canada was the first country and until recently the only country to offer private sponsorship to refugees. The PSR programme has allowed groups of Canadians and organisations to offer protection and a fresh start to more than 300,000 refugees since its beginning in 1979.

Source: Open Society Foundations⁹

The Categories of Private Sponsorship in Canada

In addition to government sponsored (or assisted) refugees (GAR), Canada has several categories of private sponsors:

- **Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH):** A Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) is an incorporated organisation that has signed an agreement with Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada to resettle refugees through the private sponsorship program. Usually religious, ethnocultural or humanitarian in nature, SAHs can sponsor refugees themselves or work with others in the community who wish to do so. There are currently more than 100 SAHs working on local, regional and national levels in Canada. They have also formed their own association to increase cohesion among the member organisations and develop a common national perspective and voice for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program.
- **Group of Five (G5):** Five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents who live in the community of expected settlement can directly enter into an agreement with the Canadian government to act as guarantors, providing the necessary financial and other support for the duration of the sponsorship period. Each group member completes a personal financial profile and the group collectively completes a settlement plan and financial assessment.
- **Community Sponsor (CS):** Any not for profit organisation or business located in the community where the refugees are expected to settle can make an organisational commitment to sponsor. Community Sponsors must undergo financial and settlement plan assessments by the Canadian government each time they wish to sponsor. Like G5s, Community Sponsors must demonstrate that the organisation is willing and able to commit funds necessary to meet the required financial obligations.

⁹ Rojas Maria Teresa, How Private Sponsorship Could Help Resettle Refugees, Open Society Foundations, 16 Dec 2016, Available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/how-private-sponsorship-programs-could-help-resettle-refugees>

Interested individuals can also become as co-sponsors of refugees by partnering with a local SAH CG or a CS. Each sponsorship group has its own procedures for screening and approving a co-sponsor, and establishing the division of responsibilities in the settlement plan.

Additionally, the Canadian Government offers a **Blended Visa Office-Referred** (BVOR) Refugee Program. It is designed as a cost sharing arrangement to resettle refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and submitted to Canadian visa offices abroad by matching them with a private sponsor.

Under the BVOR Program, the Government of Canada provides up to six months of income support, while private sponsors provide another six months of financial support, start-up costs and up to a year of social and emotional support.

Positive Outcomes

According to Leslie Emory, executive director of the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organisation, which helps link immigrants and refugees with settlement services, privately sponsored refugees have a better chance of early and successful integration. A government evaluation has shown that privately sponsored refugees acquire language skills more quickly, enter the workforce sooner and have better health outcomes than government-assisted refugees.

“Privately sponsored refugees have an on-the-ground family here, ... They have an entire group preparing for them specifically, anticipating their needs, setting up a home before they arrive.”

Leslie Emory, Executive Director of the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organisation¹⁰

Canada's Resettlement quota

On 1 November 2017, the Government of Canada announced its immigration targets for the years 2018, 2019 and 2020.

For calendar 2018, the targets are 18,000 (66.7%) PSR (Privately Sponsored Refugee), 1,500 (5.6%) BVOR (Blended Visa Office Referral) and 7,500 (27.8%) GAR (Government Assisted Refugee) newcomers, for a total of 27,000 in these three categories.

¹⁰ Bryanna Leslie, "Canada's refugee success story", IRIN, 14 July 2016.
Available at: <https://www.irinnews.org/feature/2016/07/14/canada%E2%80%99s-refugee-success-story>

In addition, the Government is targeting 16,000 “protected persons in Canada & dependents abroad”, for a total of 43,000 refugees and protected persons. The forecast also provides for this total to be as low as 36,500 and as high as 48,000, with privately sponsored refugees ranging from 16,000 to 20,000.

By comparison, the previously announced target for the current year (2017) is 16,000 PSR, 1,500 BVOR, 7,500 GAR newcomers, for a total of 25,000 refugee newcomers, plus 15,000 “protected persons in Canada & dependents abroad”.

The target of 27,000 refugee newcomers for 2018 is up 8% over the 2017 target (with the actual number still to be determined.) However, the target for PSRs is up 12.5%.

The annual targets for 2017 through 2018 are all below the recent high of 55,800 refugees and protected persons in Canada & dependents abroad admitted in 2016.

On 1 November 2017, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada released details on its 2018 multi-year Immigration Levels Plan. Canada will welcome 310,000 new permanent residents in 2018, 330,000 in 2019 and 340,000 in 2020.

Canadian Refugee Resettlement by the Numbers	2018
Government Assisted	7,500
Joint Govt/Private – Blended Visa Office Referred	1,500
Privately Sponsored	18,000
Sub-total – all refugees	27,000
Protected Persons in Canada & Dependents Abroad	16,000
Total Refugees and Protected Persons	43,000

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) 2017 Annual Report to Parliament¹¹

¹¹ Notice – Supplementary Information 2018-2020 Immigration Levels Plan, Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2018.html>

Government-led Resettlement Schemes for Syrian Refugees in the United Kingdom



Taking the lead in international efforts to help those affected by the conflict in Syria, [the UK has allocated £2.46 billion towards the Syrian crisis since 2012.](#)¹² Next to being one of the largest donors to the crisis, the UK government also provides protection to refugees through resettlement.

The UK has been a participant in the programme led by the United Nations which aims to help the most vulnerable refugees in need of resettlement, prior to the Syrian conflict.

The two resettlement schemes that operate in partnership with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) include the Gateway Protection Programme and the Mandate Refugee Programme which together aim to resettle a modest number of fewer than a thousand refugees a year.

In response to the large number of Syrians fleeing the conflict, the UK has decided to expand its legal pathways for resettlement. Syrian refugees can be admitted to the United Kingdom through one of the following resettlements routes:

- **The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)** - Launched in January 2014, the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was designed to provide sanctuary to the most vulnerable of refugees. After identifying those most at risk, UNHCR submits their cases for consideration. Every case must go through a security screening process and refugees must also complete a full medical assessment overseen by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Refugees resettled under this scheme are fully funded by the central government for a period of 12 months. The scope of the scheme was expanded in July 2017, allowing nationalities other than Syrians who were affected by the Syrian conflict to be considered for resettlement.
- **The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)** - In April 2016, the UK government pledged to resettle up to 3000 children and their families in the United Kingdom from the Middle East and North Africa region over the course of the current Parliament. This refugee programme specifically targets unaccompanied children and children at risk including those threatened with child labour, child marriage and other forms of abuse or exploitation.

Between March 2014 and November 2017 over 200 local authorities volunteered to welcome refugees. Utilising all the available resettlement programmes, they managed to resettle over 8500 refugees in the UK, half of whom are children.¹³

¹² Factsheet: The UK's humanitarian aid response to the Syria crisis, Department of International Development, 14th Dec 2017, Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/668340/UK_Syria_Crisis_Response_Summary__2017.12.14_.pdf

¹³ Home Office Quarterly Immigration Statistics, January to March 2017, 25 May 2017; 8,500 refugees arrive on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/8500-refugees-arrive-on-the-vulnerable-persons-resettlement-scheme>

The Community Sponsorship Scheme in the UK



UK Government launched an online service to help refugees who come to the UK. The online service, launched alongside the community sponsorship scheme, allows people to donate goods, services and their free time to resettled refugees in the UK.

The UK was also one of the first countries to develop its own refugee sponsorship scheme based on the very successful Canadian model. The Community Sponsorship scheme gives civil society a chance to directly participate in refugee protection by taking on the responsibility to resettle a refugee family in the UK and provide financial, emotional and practical support for the duration of the sponsorship.

The Community Sponsorship scheme was officially introduced in the UK in July 2016, at Lambeth Palace by Home Secretary Amber Rudd and Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Refugee families sponsored by community groups are resettled through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and therefore their numbers contribute to the fixed quota of 23,000 Syrian refugees pledged to be resettled by the government between 2015 and 2020.

An Expert on the UK's Community Sponsorship

In an interview on IOHR web TV, Mr. Bekele Woyecha, Senior Project Manager at the foundation of Sponsor Refugees of Citizens UK, stated that community sponsorship differs from traditional resettlement schemes:

“It brings civil society at the heart of welcome and integration.”

Bekele Woyecha, Senior Project Manager at Sponsor Refugees



Traditional or government-led resettlement programmes outsource integration to organisations after the arrival of refugees. With Community Sponsorship, it is totally different. It is communities that get involved and provide financial, emotional and practical support to the resettled families to help them integrate. It takes lots of preparations and various skills to meet the new arrivals' basic needs including finding an Arabic speaking interpreter and connecting the family with a local doctor. However as a result, [the hard work the sponsorship requires is what gives the refugees the voice they deserve](#) to become self-sufficient in the long-run.

“For a community to group to qualify to resettle a family, first of all, you need to become a community”

Bekele Woyecha, Senior Project Manager at Sponsor Refugees

The steps to fulfil the criteria of the sponsorship are set out in clear guidelines. Requirements of becoming a Community Sponsor in the UK include obtaining [charity status](#) or working under the umbrella of a charity, the demonstration of previous [experience with people of vulnerable background](#), the development of a credible and detailed [resettlement plan](#) and [safeguarding policy](#), and [the local authority must also provide a written authorisation](#) for the group attesting that the group is allowed to receive a refugee family.

During the application process, sponsors must demonstrate their ability to fulfil all of the above criteria. The process does not only assess the eligibility of the sponsorship group but their commitment, the eagerness and state of readiness to the resettlement scheme.

Caritas Diocese of Salford, which was the second sponsorship group in the country to receive a refugee family in November last year, submitted a 63-page resettlement plan:

“you understand and are ready to deliver on all aspects of resettlement from health and welfare to accommodation and benefits,”

“You have to put a group together comprising of a combination of people who have relevant professional skills, plus willing volunteers.”

Sean Ryan, National Community Sponsorship Coordinator for Caritas¹⁴

¹⁴ Siegfried Kristy, So, your country isn't keen to resettle refugees. Are you?, IRIN, 19 June 2017, Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/country,,,GBR,,5948ef1c4,0.html>

The Private and Community Sponsorship Resettlement Scheme Group



The Sponsor's Responsibilities

Sponsoring groups agree to provide the refugees with financial support, care, lodging and settlement assistance for the duration of the sponsorship period. There are two broad categories of support:

Financial Support

Sponsors must commit to cover the [immediate resettlement costs and ongoing living expenses](#) of a refugee and his or her family members, typically for one year. This means providing furniture, household start-up effects, food staples and school fee and supplies (if applicable) on arrival, and covering ongoing expenditures such as rent, utilities, phone, food, transportation (bus or metro passes or tickets), and a living allowance (food, pocket money, unanticipated expenses, recreation, etc). Sponsors may reduce the amount of funds they need to raise by securing in-kind donations for shelter, clothing, furniture, household start-up costs and food.

The cost of sponsorship of a resettled refugee family varies from one country to another. In Canada, it is estimated that [private sponsorship groups need to raise \\$27,000 Cdn \(app. £15,700\) to support a family of four for a year](#). This amount may be may be significantly higher depending on the resettlement location (there are currently 23 resettlement locations in Canada) and more than double in major cities like Vancouver and Toronto where accommodation costs are high. In the UK, to order to become a sponsor (for a typical 2-adult family):

[“You need to be able to raise at least £9000 if you are to bring in a family.”](#)

Bekele Woyecha, Senior Project Manager at Sponsor Refugees

The resettlement of refugee children does not require additional funds as they receive most of the support through the education system.

Resettlement Support

Private sponsors must also commit to help refugees set up and adjust to life in the host country, starting with welcoming refugees on arrival at the airport and settling them in their temporary or permanent accommodation.

According to Bekele Woyecha, the first thing refugees need when they arrive in the United Kingdom is a warm welcome. "Waiting for the refugee family at the airport shows right from the start that they are valued members of the community and someone cares about them" he said. "The warm welcome is a key component of the community sponsorship programme and it is what gives resettled refugees the first impression of their new surroundings, everything else, housing, food, and a warm blanket will follow."

- **Housing:** Arranging temporary or permanent housing. In Canada, sponsors must provide a suitable place of accommodation for one year while in the UK, housing must be arranged for a period of two years.
- **Transportation:** To accommodation and to and from appointments and activities. two years.
- **Interpretation services:** Arranging an interpreter if needed to facilitate communication with service providers
- **Orientation:** Help with opening a bank account, using public transport, grocery, and other shopping, and navigating community services.
- **Health:** Connect with a family doctor, dentists, and other health care providers, and help apply for universal health coverage.
- **Schools:** Help register children for school, and connect to government-funded Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS).
- **Language Training:** Language learning is of crucial importance. It empowers the individual, helps in entering the job market, access key services, build relationships and gain some level of autonomy and independence. In Canada, an assessment of the language level is required in order to facilitate referral to government-sponsored language training courses. Sponsors in the UK must guarantee Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for a minimum of 10 hours per week per adult for 12 weeks upon arrival at least for the period of the sponsorship.
- **Links to essential government programmes:** In Canada, sponsors must assist with the application for Social Insurance Number (akin to a National Insurance Number in the UK), health programmes, and help apply for Canada's Child Tax Benefit (government credit provided per child to Canadian families) if applicable.
- **Employment:** Provide support finding employment or link to appropriate employment services.
- **Childcare:** If refugee children are not of school age, arrange for services.
- **Community Resources:** Connect with settlement agencies or workers, cultural organisations, or individuals with similar backgrounds or interests.
- **Emotional and Moral Support:** Help deal with culture shock and isolation.

Preceding list of responsibilities provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and UK Visas and Immigration¹⁵

¹⁵ Sponsor a refugee, Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program.html>, How you can help refugees coming to the UK, Home Office, <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>

Canada's Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

The IFHP provides temporary health care coverage for non-insured refugees resettling in Canada from the day they arrive in Canada until they are able to receive coverage through their provincial health plan (which could be immediately or after a delay, depending on the province of resettlement.) The IFHP also provides refugees with supplement dental care, vision care and prescription drugs. Certain health care providers register to assist refugees under this program, and some dentists and others have offered to do pro bono work for refugees in critical need of care.

Government Support of Sponsoring Groups

The Canadian Government has developed a Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), which provides information and ongoing training to inform Canadians about private sponsorship, prepare sponsors for the arrival of refugees, and provide counsel and support to ensure their successful integration.

Only a year after the launch of this new approach to resettlement, the UK government has already shown its commitment to the Community Sponsorship.

On the anniversary of the Community Sponsorship scheme, the UK Home Office announced extra funding of £1 million for capacity building. The additional amount of funds aims to encourage more organisations to sign up to participate in the resettlement scheme. Organisations who have the capabilities and the expertise to:

- conduct training and provide support for community groups
- engage in raising awareness of the resettlement programme
- support the evaluation to help better understand how the programme works

were invited to apply by mid-December 2017.¹⁶

Between 17 - 20 July 2017, the British Home Office, together with Social Finance and the Good Faith Partnership, has also organised a roadshow with the purpose of promoting the sponsorship scheme of refugees throughout the United Kingdom. The joint UK - Canada delegation visited six cities in Britain including Kingston-Upon-Thames, London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Aberystwyth.

¹⁶ Capacity Building for Community Sponsorship of Refugees, <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/2638fb30-6587-4e0f-b50e-53350b84af30>

Eligibility for Resettlement

To qualify for being accepted as a Canadian Government Assisted Refugee (GAR), a Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSR) or a Blended Visa Office Refereed (BVOR) refugee, an individual must already have refugee status documented by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) or the country in which the he or she is currently living. The exception is Syrians and Iraqis sponsored by a SAH or one of its Constituent Groups.

Persons eligible for Canada's refugee and humanitarian resettlement program fall into two classes:

Convention Refugee Abroad

These are individuals who have fled their country of citizenship or are without nationality and have a well-founded fear of persecution that prevents them from returning to their home country or country of former habitual residence. They must also be outside of and looking to resettle in Canada, and be unable to integrate into their current country of refuge or asylum. Refugees in this class must also have no other offer of resettlement.

Country of Asylum

These are individuals who are outside their country of citizenship or habitual residence with no possibility of finding an adequate solution to his or her situation within a reasonable time. They must also have been or continue to be profoundly affected by civil war or armed conflict, or have suffered serious violations of human rights.

Due to the current severity of the Syrian conflict, the priority of resettlement in the UK is given to Syrian refugees and nationalities that are directly affected by the Syrian conflict including Iraqis. In order to be eligible for resettlement (known as 'indefinite leave to remain'), applicants must first register with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on arrival in their country of refuge or asylum to obtain a document attesting to their refugee status and each individual applicant must go through an assessment overseen by the UN Refugee Agency before they are referred to the Home Office. Refugees are identified on the basis of the clearly defined and rigorous criteria of vulnerability. Accordingly, priority consideration is given to refugees most in need of support including people with legal and physical protection needs, medical needs, survivors of violence and torture, women at risk, children and adolescents, and elderly refugees.¹⁷

How is the Refugee Family Matched with the Sponsoring Group?

Once a refugee has official proof of refugee status, he or she can begin an application for resettlement with the Canadian embassy. A Canadian visa officer makes the final decision on resettlement, which occurs after what can be a long and rigorous application process. This includes passing medical, security and admissibility checks and undergoing an assessment of one's ability to settle successfully in Canada based on factors such as the existence of relatives or a sponsor in Canada, the ability to speak or learn English or French, employment potential and resourcefulness.

In Canada, there are two ways to match a sponsoring group and a refugee:

Sponsor-referred

The Sponsoring group can suggest the name of a refugee or refugee family it is interested in sponsoring. The group may have obtained the referral from an overseas contact, friend, a relative of refugee, or elsewhere. The private sponsors submit the sponsorship application on behalf of the sponsor-referred refugee to the Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O), a government organisation, that will decide which city will best suit each refugee's needs, based on factors such as:

- the language they speak
- where family and friends live in Canada
- ethnic, cultural and religious communities in the area
- medical needs
- availability of settlement services

To be sponsored as a refugee by a Group of Five, or a Community Sponsor, the principal applicant must already have refugee status at the time the applications are submitted.

Visa office-referred

The Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O) administers an inventory of visa office-referred cases that have already been selected but not yet matched with a private sponsor. Visa office-offered refugees are normally ready to travel to Canada within one to four months of the match with the sponsor.

Blended Visa Office Referred refugees are admitted through a different process. The UNHCR identifies refugees that can be sponsored under the BVOR program and refers them to the Canadian embassy. Refugees' profiles are then posted on a government website or are made available through the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program. This enables sponsors to identify individuals or families they wish to support and to submit sponsorship applications. The Canadian Government assigns a priority for the overseas interviews of these individuals to expedite processing.

A Group of 5 or Community Sponsor may obtain a referral from an overseas contact, a friend, the relative of a member of the organisation or elsewhere. A Sponsorship Agreement Holder will match a Constituent Group with qualified refugees that it has already targeted for sponsorship.

Community Groups in the UK are not allowed to identify the family they would like to sponsor. In the UK, once all the relevant documents have been submitted and the community group's application has been approved by the Home Office, [it is the UNHCR's task to match the Syrian refugee family to be resettled with the sponsors.](#)

Status of Refugees on Arrival

The status of resettled refugees establishes the range of rights and entitlements refugees are given upon arrival to the host country.

From the moment of arrival, refugees in Canada permanent resident status and as such have equal rights under the law. After their period of private sponsorship, they are entitled to the same social service and income support programs as all Canadians, ensuring they can access government income assistance and resources over the long term.

In the UK, before July 2017, upon arrival, the legal status granted to resettled refugees was humanitarian protection status for a period of 5 years. This status allowed access to the labour market and eligibility to apply and receive support from public funds.¹⁸ Refugees who are resettled under VPRP after July 2017 are given refugee status, while all refugees resettled prior to this date can request a change to their status from humanitarian protection to refugee status.¹⁹ Refugee status extends their entitlements by allowing an easier access to student support for those in higher education and the internationally recognised refugee travel document.

Duration of the Obligation

In Canada, a private sponsor's obligation begins from the moment refugees arrive Canada, and extends for a period of one year or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first. In exceptional circumstances, a visa officer may determine that the refugee requires more time to become established in Canada and will ask the sponsoring group to extend the sponsorship period to a maximum of 36 months.

Community groups in the UK are financially and emotionally responsible for the resettled refugee family that stay under the care for a period of 12 months. Accommodation, however, must be arranged for the minimum of 2 years.

¹⁸ The UK response to the Syrian refugee crisis, Available at: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06805>

¹⁹ Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme – Arrangements: Written statement HCWS551, 22 March 2017 Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-03-22/HCWS551>

Interview with a Syrian refugee who Privately Sponsored his Mother and Five Siblings to come to Canada



On a grey Saturday morning, a group of Canadians gather in the meeting room of MOSAIC, one of Canada's largest resettlement organisations, to attend a free full-day workshop. Of different ages and political persuasions, these citizens have one thing in common: all are volunteers who have invested months of their time, energy and financial resources to privately sponsor refugees to Canada.

Today's workshop is hosted by the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RTSP), an initiative funded by the Canadian government to provide information and training to help private sponsors prepare for the imminent arrival of their refugee or refugee family.

From Refugee to Trainer

The RSTP Trainer, Mohamed Alsaleh, invites everyone to help themselves to the free coffee, muffins and fruit laid out on a table at the back of the room. Slight, soft-spoken and neatly dressed in navy pants, matching cardigan and a burgundy-collared shirt, Alsaleh, 28, is himself a newcomer to Canada, one of just 200 government assisted Syrian refugees who arrived in 2014.

“It was like winning a lottery,” Alsaleh says, referring to his luck in being chosen from among millions Syrian refugees seeking resettlement.”²⁶

In 2012 Alsaleh was a fourth year medical student in Homs, and a human rights activist who had been anonymously uploading photos of anti-government protests on social media. On the day he was writing his final med school exam, Syrian state forces entered his classroom, arrested him and took him to a Damascus prison where he was tortured. After two subsequent arrests and imprisonment in seven different detention centres, Alsaleh's family, fearing for his life, helped him flee to Lebanon.

In the meeting room Alsaleh and his manager finish the official welcome and introductions, and he runs through the day's agenda. Titled, “After Arrival,” the workshop is designed to ensure sponsors are prepared for the imminent arrival of refugees and the obligatory year of financial and settlement support that follows. Attendees will first review settlement preparations and their responsibilities as sponsors, such as how to access and help refugees navigate essential services. These include language classes, school registration for children, youth support programs, and Canada's Interim Federal Health Program, which provides immediate health care coverage for on arrival. Sponsors will also learn how to recognize culture shock, understand power imbalances, be ethical in their dealings, and how to prepare for the longer-term goal of phasing out financial and settlement support after 12 months.

Alsaleh is quick to make a distinction.

“The minute refugees arrive in Canada they are no longer called refugees,” he says. They are newcomers or recent immigrants and immediately enjoy the same rights as all Canadians.

Though his voice is soft, his love of Canadians, who he calls “super humans”, and his support for Canada’s refugee sponsorship program, are fierce. That’s not just because Alsaleh was once a refugee. In the three years since he arrived in Canada, he has formed his own private sponsorship group and with the help of other Canadians, has raised tens of thousands of dollars to privately sponsor his mother and five siblings to come to Canada. His family, who are currently refugees in Turkey, recently had their screening interview with Canadian visa officials and have been cleared for resettlement. Alsaleh lights up at the prospect that they will arrive in three to four months. When he arrived in Canada he thought it would take at least a decade before they could be reunited.

“What I like about the private sponsorship model,” says Alsaleh, “is that it provides additionality—additional numbers (of refugees) that come to Canada...who wouldn’t be able to come otherwise.”

The Refugee Family

Approximately 90 percent of Canada’s private sponsorship cases involve family reunification.

One example is the Dayekh family who were privately sponsored to Canada in June 2016 by a community group in Powell River, British Columbia, a small city on Canada’s remote northwest coast. The family’s eldest son, Resq, 22, spearheaded the application process from Amman, Jordan, where he, his parents and three siblings had been living since fleeing Aleppo after their house was bombed in 2012.

“My uncle told me about it,” Resq says referring to Canada’s private sponsorship program. His uncle had been privately sponsored for resettlement in Canada by a Vancouver church—a Sponsorship Agreement Holder—so Resq asked for the pastor’s email.

“I emailed and he responded.” Already registered with the UNHCR, the Dayekh’s started sending him the required paperwork.

“After a few months we got an interview at the Canadian Embassy in Amman.”

Canadian visa officers reviewed the Dayekh family’s application and they underwent medical, security and criminal checks. Several months later they were accepted for resettlement and referred to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to prepare for travel to Canada.

The Private Sponsor

Around the same time Resq Dayekh learned of Canada's private sponsorship program, Liz Brach, a recently retired schoolteacher from Powell River was cycling through Europe on her dream vacation. The sight of hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers languishing in European cities, hawking cheap souvenirs to survive, and behind continually chased by local police, stunned Brach. She felt compelled to do something when she returned home.

"One of my best friends in Smithers (a remote Canadian community) had privately sponsored a family of 14 from the Congo through her church community," Brach recalls. "I thought if she could do this, I can, too."

Brach spoke to a couple of friends who immediately came on board. She credits the media stories about the Syrian refugees that dominated the news at the time. In particular, the image of toddler Alan Kurdi's lifeless body washed up on a Turkish beach had galvanized the will of a nation to help. Realizing she needed larger backing and protection from financial liability, Brach approached the priest at her church. "He said 'go for it'".

The priest directed her to the Catholic Archdiocese in Vancouver—the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) helping the Dayekh family with their refugee application. When the SAH agreed to support Liz through her local church, the retired schoolteacher posted a request for help on her Facebook page. Twelve people immediately signed up. Liz's church also permitted her to ask for donations at Sunday mass.

"I was overwhelmed by the generosity," Liz says of the parishioners and citizens who donated thousands of dollars.

When it came to choosing a family to sponsor Liz, who calls herself a woman of faith, said she believed that God would send her the family she was meant to have.

"I had no criteria on their religion, their nationality. Anything."

She admits to challenges, the biggest being finding suitable accommodation, but there, too, she trusted that things would work out, and they did.

"We found a house recently purchased by a couple and their grown daughter, who had travelled extensively, and were keen to rent it to a refugee family for a good price."

The private sponsorship process has restored Brach's faith in humanity. She speaks of individuals who surprised her with large, lump sum donations, and of a local dentist who agreed to provide free dental care.

Asked about the Dayekh family, Brach echoes the words of Mohamed Alsaleh: she feels as she has won the lottery.

She calls the family amazing ambassadors for the refugee cause, and feels that their arrival in Powell River, along with another privately sponsored refugee family has enriched the community. Preliminary research supports her sentiment, indicating that refugee sponsorship builds social cohesion by bringing people together for a common cause, and creates alliances between faith-based and secular organisations.

The experience has been so positive that Brach and her private sponsorship group, Hands Across the Water, plan to sponsor a second refugee family, this one jointly with the Canadian government under the Blended-Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program.

The Outcome

In the case of the Dayekh's, a year and a half after their arrival in Canada, the family has thrived in their new community and is not only settled, but also financially self-sufficient. Resq, who found work near Powell River in his first months as a newcomer, is now in his second term of post-secondary studies in mechatronics and robotics at the BC Institute of Technology and living in residence near Vancouver, while his three younger siblings are flourishing in Powell River's public schools. Resq's mom, Rania, has started her own business making and selling humus and other Syrian foods to local markets and grocery stores, and his father, Gaby, is employed full-time at a local window manufacturing company, has regained his health and has rediscovered his love of painting.

When asked about the challenge of resettling in a small Canadian community, Resq is positive. "It was like another home," he says, adding "If you know the language, everything else is easy."

Resq also credits his private sponsorship group for his family's success.

"They feel that they are responsible for you, so they take you around, they show you places, introduce you to people, help you learn English. I think it's better than the government sponsorship."

Resq's father, Gaby, is more blunt:

"I'm lucky to be here. I'm happy here."

Asked if he would ever return to Syria, Gaby says he would go back only to visit.

"I feel like this is my home."

Back in the Vancouver offices of MOSAIC, Mohamed Alsaleh is wrapping up the morning segment of the training session. He deftly facilitates a discussion on managing expectations—not just of the refugees, but of the sponsors as well. The coffee and muffins have been cleared from the back table and replaced with a sumptuous Middle Eastern buffet. The meal, free to participants at today's workshop, was provided by a local immigrant business that wanted to give back to the community.

Before the participants break for lunch, Alsaleh wants to ensure they understand that refugees are neither the victims nor the villains portrayed in the media.

"They have courage, resilience and strength," Alsaleh says, adding that if the men, women and children these private sponsors are about to welcome to Canada have gotten this far, it's because they have survival skills.

"They will make it."

The Current Status of Community Sponsorship in the UK

According to official data, as of July 2017, [10 community groups](#) have received authorisation from the Home Office and have already resettled [53 refugees](#) in the United Kingdom.²⁰ [An overall of 10 families](#) who otherwise would have had to remain in dangerous, and overcrowded detention centres and refugee camps in harsh conditions.

Mr. Bekele Woyecha has confirmed during an interview on IOHR web TV in December 2017 that Sponsor Refugees, a foundation established under UK Citizens is [currently assisting 58-59 community groups](#) who have either received approval from the Home Office to resettle a refugee family or are currently in the process of fulfilling the sponsorship application criteria.

20 Saltmarsh Matthew, UK pushes to deepen its community refugee scheme, UNHCR, 19 July 2017, Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2017/7/596f2d1b4/uk-pushes-to-deepen-its-community-refugee-scheme.html>

An Interview with a Syrian Refugee in the UK



Bekele Woyecha Senior Project Manager at Sponsor Refugees of Citizens UK, Ghassan Syrian Refugee, Major Nick Coke Refugee Response Coordinator for The Salvation Army

On a cold January day, IOHR travelled to the south of London to meet one of the Syrian Refugees that has been resettled in the UK through the Community Sponsorship scheme that was launched in July 2016. In February 2017, Ghassan, his wife Manal and their three children were the third family to be resettled in the UK.

In an interview with IOHR, Major Nick Coke, Refugee Response Coordinator for The Salvation Army, spoke about the time the Salvation Army church he leads in the community of Merton decided to take a greater part in the protection of refugees.

In August 2015 Nick and his wife were celebrating becoming the new leaders of their church community when they saw the image of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi's body washed up on the shores of Turkey. They realised they wanted to do more to help refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict.

“While the Salvation Army has already been involved in providing aid to refugees in countries such as Greece, we all felt like we want to do something more personal.”

As they began to look into the application process to sponsor refugees they realised it was a lot more hard work than anticipated, such as finding an Arabic interpreter. They did not have all the skills required.

“People involved in the Community Sponsorship knew that welcoming the family would not only be beneficial for the resettled family but for the community as well. It would change all those involved.”

The application process took about a year and the refugees arrived in the UK six weeks after they were matched with the local community group.

Nick wondered of the refugees.

“Will they like us?”

Ghassan - A refugee journey

Ghassan lived a modest life as a vegetable vendor in Syria when the civil war erupted in 2011. He was forced to flee with his family to Lebanon, where he spent six years and endured dire conditions. From Lebanon he sought a long-term solution to their situation but found the application process for resettlement quite challenging. He said that the basic forms were complicated to fill out but were made even more complicated due to the additional forms related to his daughter's medical condition that needed to be also completed.

Their daughter's medical condition also made their already fragile circumstances even more difficult.

“I had to work double shifts to be able to pay the charges for a blood transfusion for my daughter and often I was the one who had to provide the blood.”

After living in Lebanon, they were finally accepted for resettlement and were matched with a sponsor group in the London borough of Merton. They were welcomed there by The Salvation Army in February 2017.

Ghassan - A refugee perspective

While they were informed about what awaited them in the UK they were pleasantly surprised by the amount of help they have received. It exceeded their expectations and enabled them to start to rebuild their lives.

Only 10 months on after their arrival, the family has become accustomed to visiting the doctor by themselves and handling everyday situations like using public transport. Ghassan politely texted his estimated arrival time to the minute after being able to calculate the vagaries of London transport.

The greatest challenge they have encountered was learning the local language. However, both Ghassan and Manal have been taking language classes and making great progress. Ghassan was confident and proudly addressed the IOHR team in English to show his growing skills.

Their youngest little boy, aged 3 started nursery in January 2018 while his siblings, aged 9 and 11 are picking up the language in school and really enjoying their new classes.

Since Ghassan arrived in the UK, he is already working two jobs to support his family and he's eager to work hard and realises he must improve his English to have more work opportunities. When he was asked about the future and the possibility to return to Syria his answer was clear and emotional:

**“Of course I would love to go back to my country, but sadly at the moment
There is nothing left in my country to go back to”**

The UK has become the family's new home and now they aim to give back after how much they have received. To start off, Ghassan has volunteered to assist the next refugee family that is soon to be resettled in their neighbourhood.

“Because I've been helped I would like to help others.”

The end of February will be the one year anniversary of the family's arrival in the UK and the community is planning to celebrate with all the people who have been involved in helping in one way or another during this time. IOHR looks forward to celebrating with them.

The Future of Community Sponsorship in the UK



The UK's Community Sponsorship scheme is in the development phase after 18 months since its inauguration. For experts, practitioners and government officials, Canada's PSR serves as an example to improve their own community sponsorship scheme and tailor it to the local environment.

While there is understandable cautiousness from the side of the government and civil society due to the novelty of the resettlement scheme, their interest to get involved and committed to the Community Sponsorship is evident. Communities who have already resettled families are sharing their experiences with policymakers and other community groups who are preparing to welcome a family. There are communities that become so devoted they do not stop at helping one family. The Bude Refugee Support Group was the first in the UK who has received the Home Office's approval to welcome their second refugee family in January 2018 following the charity's successful resettlement of the first Syrian refugee family in 2017.²¹

Community Groups are not alone during the application process or after the refugee family's arrival. Civic society organisations like the Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees continue to provide assistance and training to community groups, listen to their needs and also make frequent visits to Canada to learn more about the PSR and share the UK experience. In addition, it has been recently announced that Sponsor Refugees is working on welcoming a refugee family themselves.

Resettlement Needs

The UN Refugee Agency predicts the global resettlement needs in 2018 to be 1.2 million persons indicating a small (less than 1%) increase respect to the previous year. These estimates reflect the needs of people fleeing conflict, violence, and persecution from a total of 63 countries of asylum.

As current numbers of global forced displacement continue to reach unprecedented levels, resettlement persists to be a decisive solution for some of the world's most vulnerable refugees.

While government-led resettlement schemes remain of crucial importance, allowing private and community groups, organisations, businesses and schools to take on the responsibility to help refugees resettle and adjust to their new lives can make a significant difference in providing a durable solution to the current refugee situations.

21 Cripps Rosie, Refugee group granted permission to resettle second family, Bude and Stratton Post, 30 Nov 2017, Available at: <http://www.bude-today.co.uk/article.cfm?id=109472>

"With the number of refugees at its highest level in more than two decades, the need for resettlement is greater than ever. Community-based private sponsorship is a powerful tool to help the ever-widening gap between resettlement needs and places available. UNHCR stands ready to work with States, civil society and communities, together with GRSI partners, to establish and expand private sponsorship programmes – a concrete example of the collaboration and partnership called for in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants."

Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees²²

The Community Sponsorship can be an important tool for the UK in fulfilling its international obligations and increase the number of refugees resettled in the UK by receiving a quota separate from the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.

Eligibility for resettlement

Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, millions have been displaced within Syria and over 5.4 million people were forced to leave and seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The countries that host the largest number of Syrian refugees, at the moment, are Turkey (3.3 million), Lebanon (over 1 million) and Jordan (655,000).²³

Syrian people fleeing conflict and persecution make up 40% of the overall refugee population who are in need of resettlement. The largest refugee populations after Syrian are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (12%), and the Central African Republic (8%).

The international community and several countries have responded to the enormous humanitarian costs of the Syrian conflict by committing to help the people of Syria. The UK has become one of the largest contributors of humanitarian aid to the crisis and has established the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme. These schemes mean a commitment to resettle the most vulnerable refugees of Syrian origin and those nationalities such as Iraqis who have been affected by the war.

The UK government should expand the community sponsorship scheme to refugee populations that have been overlooked during the fast-growing Syrian emergency.

²² Five Countries Working on New Refugee Sponsorship Programs, Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) Launces Guidebook to Share Best Practices, The Radcliffe Foundation, 18 Sept 2017, Available at: <http://radcliffefoundation.org/grsi/>

²³ UNHCR, Syria Emergency, Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/syria-emergency.html>

Eligibility for sponsors

In Canada, non-government organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations, community organisations and groups of individuals may sponsor refugees by entering into an agreement that commits them to provide refugees with necessary financial and settlement support for a fixed period of time, typically one year. Sponsoring groups must reside or have representatives in the community where the sponsored refugees will live. The aim is to have a cohesive and committed group of citizens helping refugees get established in their community versus one person acting alone.

In the UK, the Community Sponsorship is limited in scope and acquiring charity status or partnering with a charity is strictly required to become a sponsor. Diversifying the scheme and permitting businesses and schools to sponsor refugees would meet the needs of all private actors who interested in getting involved in this humanitarian cause.

“It is the case in Canada and there is no reason why we cannot do it in Britain. Schools are one of the places where you can get integration easily.”

Bekele Woyecha, Senior Project Manager at Sponsor Refugees

There are businesses in the United Kingdom, known to Mr. Woyecha, who have decided to set up a charity so they can resettle a refugee family. He believes that in the long run, schools and business should have this opportunity.

Canada's Success Story

One of Canada's success stories involves Jim Estill, the CEO of multimillion-dollar appliance company Danby from Guelph, Ontario. Estill has allocated C\$1.5m (£904,000) towards the resettlement of over 200 Syrian refugees to Canada and mobilised several religious and aid organisations to support his ambitious plan.



Jim Estill, Source: The Guardian²⁴

“I still don't see what the big deal is. And I'm surprised more people don't step up and do it,” he said. “I didn't want to grow old and say I stood by and did nothing. So I decided to do my small part.”

Jim Estill, CEO at Danby

²⁴ Kassam Ashifa, The Canadian who spent C\$1.5m to rescue more than 200 Syrian refugees, The Guardian, 6 Jan 2017, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/06/jim-estill-syrian-refugees-canada-guelph-ontario>

Matching the Refugee Family with the Sponsoring Group

Research shows that one of the key motivations for people wanting to get involved in refugee sponsorship include the desire to reunite extended refugee families and friends in need of resettlement.²⁵ Family reunification constitutes approximately 90 % of Canada's private sponsorship cases.

The reunification of families and friends can help with overcoming the trauma and settle into the new community faster.

“It is good for the family’s wellbeing to be reunited.”

Major Nick Coke The Salvation Army

The current Community Sponsorship scheme in the UK does not make it possible for sponsors to nominate a family for sponsorship and thus, family reunification is not a possible option. In the future, removing this constraint from the scheme will provide a new opportunity for refugee family and friend reunification in the UK.

Listen to the people on the ground

If the UK wants to make Community Sponsorship an efficient and long-term option to resettle refugees, it is important to listen to the people involved on the ground. Sponsors and families who have been resettled should be the main a source of information. It is important to learn from them.

“It is always important to bring civil society on board because it knows best.”

Bekele Woyecha, Senior Project Manager at Sponsor Refugees

Citizens UK will be launching a project early next year, called ‘The Ambassadors Scheme’ which will bring together resettled refugee families and those who have sponsored refugee families through the Community Sponsorship scheme in order to share their stories.

²⁵ Canada's private Sponsorship of refugees: Potential lessons for Australia, Refugee Council Australia, 24 Aug 2017,

Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/australia/canada-s-private-sponsorship-refugees-potential-lessons-australia>;

Hundman Jennifer Payne William and Jiminez Chauana Private Refugee Sponsorship in Canada, Forced Migration Review,

Available at: <http://www.fmreview.org/resettlement/hyndman-payne-jimenez.html>

Assisting refugees before arrival

While there is more and more focus on the importance of starting the integration process upon arrival, there is very small attention paid to it before the resettlement has taken place.

In the UK, the community group must prepare for the arrival of the refugee family and anticipate their health needs, accommodation, develop a network of people who would provide resettlement support and also guarantee interpreters and language classes.

Several weeks can pass between the time a refugee family is matched with a community group by UNHCR and their actual date of arrival in the UK. During this time the refugee family should be prepared to what waits for them in their new home. Most importantly, families should be informed about their financial and other obligations in their country of resettlement, attend classes to culturally prepare for their new life to minimise the experience of cultural shock, and begin attending English language classes.

Political Conversation on refugees



Source: *Twitter*²⁶

In Canada, the government's clear and decisive position on immigration sets the tone of public debate and assures widespread support of Canada's Syrian refugee programme. While anti-immigrant propaganda exists, it is not widespread and government leadership is proactive in addressing hate crime and shutting down narratives that could create a negative backlash. Political conversations keep refugee resettlement separate from the politics of radicalisation. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau often uses social media as a platform to reach his target audience, the Canadian public. He expresses his stance on immigration regularly including in this Tweet on 28 January 2017:

²⁶ Trudeau, Justin (JustinTrudeau). #WelcomeToCanada. 28 Jan 2017, 20:34 UTC. Tweet



Source: *Twitter*²⁷

To date the political rhetoric in the UK with regards to immigration has often been negative. Immigration has been characterised by inaccurate political and media portrayals which blame immigrants for, the scarcity of jobs, housing, and overburdening the welfare system. It is time for a voice at the senior political level to challenge the anti-immigrant narrative and make a clear distinction between immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees so that they can be treated appropriately.

27 Trudeau, Justin (JustinTrudeau). "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada". 28 Jan 2017, 20:20 UTC. Tweet



www.observatoryihr.org