

Syrian refugee resettlement

A guide for local authorities



Executive summary

Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

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While the guide refers to some specific organisations as examples of having particular expertise, we are not endorsing them over any other organisation.

Every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of information provided in this guide. However, in this constantly evolving policy environment, we advise readers always to seek up-to-date information from the Home Office regarding the issue of refugee resettlement.

'Syrian refugee resettlement: a guide for local authorities' was completed in spring 2016.

Cover photograph: A Syrian boy photographed at a refugee transit site in Arsal, Lebanon.

Photo credit: UNHCR / M. Hofer

Introduction

The UK's developing Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) takes place in a context of a recent history of organised refugee resettlement programmes in the UK. Many local authorities not previously involved in any resettlement schemes are now participating or considering participating in hosting Syrian refugees.

'Syrian refugee resettlement – a guide for local authorities' is for those in local authorities with a role in leading, planning, delivering and continually seeking to improve services for resettled Syrian refugees. Though it may be of most interest to those new to the programme and resettlement, even if local authorities have been involved in the SRP or previous resettlement schemes, the length of the programme means there are still opportunities to develop, particularly as early learning from the first arrivals can be applied to later groups over a longer period of time.

The guide covers the whole process for local authorities from decision-making about participating in the programme; to the practicalities of accepting individual cases and the funding available to support this; pre-arrival preparations; what to cover in the first week; ongoing support and exit arrangements; to successful integration into local communities. A summary is below. It also provides examples of practice used by some local authorities, checklists and top tips. The main guide can be found on the LGA website at www.local.gov.uk/refugees

The SRP is new and evolving, and therefore this guide covers the process as it was operating at the time of writing (in summer 2016).

How do we make it work?

Making a decision – where do we start?

There is no one model of resettlement delivery and local authorities already participating in the SRP have adapted different models. Setting up and running a successful resettlement scheme requires careful collaborative planning and great attention to detail. Different people will need to be involved at different stages across the council and local partners: from decision-makers such as senior officers and elected members to front-line practitioners working with the newly resettled families, including integration caseworkers, health and social care workers and housing support officers. The decisions made are likely to have an impact on the community and have potential budget implications.

The Home Office expects the local authority to indicate how many refugees they are likely to resettle and over what period of time. The guide suggests a range of factors that will help in deciding what numbers and timescales local structures are able to cope with, without putting pressure on existing services. This also means that the needs of refugees identified by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) can be better matched with the support available locally.

Key tasks will include coordinating the political decision-making process, and agreeing numbers, timescales and a delivery model that is suitable and financially viable for local structures. The local authority could appoint a lead officer to liaise with a regional Home Office lead and their Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP), and set up

a cross-sector working group to enable collaborative working to determine how a local authority can meet the Home Office requirements.

Accepting cases – we are in; what's next?

When a potential resettlement case is referred from the Home Office, a local authority should identify the refugees' needs from information on the Home Office portal. The local authority must check these needs against the local infrastructure and make the decision to accept the case within a couple of weeks. Health costs and provision will have to be agreed with the relevant NHS England commissioners.

Pre-arrival planning – what needs to be ready?

It will take approximately eight weeks from the time a case is first referred to the local authority to the arrival date of the refugees. In partnership with a working group and delivery partners, the local authority lead should ensure all aspects of pre-arrival preparations are being thought of and services are ready for the arrival of refugees: securing and furnishing appropriate properties; finding school and ESOL places; arranging integration support casework; ensuring interpreters and translation services are in place; ensuring access to health provision, and putting in place required procedures such as complaints and information sharing.

Financial planning – how much will it cost?

The Funding Instruction (FI) from the Home Office has all the required information on how the SRP scheme is financed and the amount a local authority is allocated for each resettled person; how and when a local authority gets paid; and how the monitoring and verification processes work.

Arrival and the first week – our refugees are here; what now?

‘Meet and greet’ at the airport, organising initial reception and transport to allocated properties are just a few of the tasks that need to be planned for the arrival day. A timetable for the first week with actions that need to be completed could be prepared, to ensure new arrivals’ basic needs are met and that they have access to resources they will require for their relocation. Remember that clients must be informed about specific support they may be able to access, and over what period of time. It is essential that additional provision doesn’t lead to dependency, when the focus must remain on integration and independence.

Local community engagement – what about the wider community?

Informing and preparing the local community for the arrival of refugees is an essential part of the resettlement process, ensuring that the host community is engaged and has a positive experience of resettlement. The local authority lead should explore options for engaging with media, local residents, local businesses and third sector organisations to maintain community cohesion and facilitate integration of newly arrived refugees within the wider community. Managing donations and providing volunteering opportunities for the members of local community should be discussed with an advisory group.

Cultural considerations – what do we need to know about Syrian culture?

Crossing cultures can be difficult in any context. Newly-arrived Syrian refugees won’t know everything about UK culture, and practitioners will need to be able to anticipate where important differences or misunderstandings might occur, from religion and ethnicity to food and drink, naming conventions, marriage, child safeguarding, to gender, mental health, smoking and littering.

Ongoing support – what support do we need to provide?

Long term planning for casework support should enable new refugees to integrate successfully into their local communities. This includes ensuring refugees’ independence, enabling them to use mainstream services, and encouraging refugee inclusion in the local area, through integration casework support during refugees’ first 12 months in the UK. Normally, casework support will be particularly intense for the first few months and then should vary according to the needs and situation of each individual.

Principles of support delivery and types of activities are proposed in line with good practice in integration support. To avoid duplication, the guide does not cover detailed information about refugee integration, but instead signposts to existing guides by leading refugee organisations currently involved in delivering resettlement.

Years 2-5 – how do we develop a long term strategy?

Home Office funding will be provided to cover additional support to resettled Syrian refugees beyond 12 months, with flexibility with regards to how they can use the additional funds.

Additional support to in years 2-5 may or may not involve casework. Local authorities might consider developing a five year resettlement package, with intensive support and focus on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) activities at first, with training, employment support and community engagement in the later stages. This strategic approach could include a focus on ensuring all arrivals have good English language skills before supporting them into employment.

The provision of additional funding to support resettled refugees beyond their first year gives local authorities the opportunity to plan strategically for the longer term inclusion of Syrian refugees in local communities. Local partners may want to consider what they hope these communities will look like in future in considering and planning for integrating new Syrians in the longer term.

Clearly it is important to take account of migration trends and other migration related schemes in this strategic planning. This might include existing schemes such as asylum dispersal, as well as other resettlement schemes such as the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) and newer schemes to resettle refugee children.

Whatever strategy is in place, the key points from this guide will be crucial:

- new refugees should be enabled to integrate successfully into their local communities
- involving local communities is essential to foster positive local relationships.



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