

Information from the Local Government Association Website

NB: Where there is reference to 'Councils', in Gloucestershire this will be the County Council taking the lead and NOT the Borough Council.

Refugees

This page is a one-stop resource for councillors and council officers to answer any questions you might have about taking in refugees. We will continue to update these resources as more information comes through - keep checking this page to stay up to date.

1. Where do we go for more information?

Local authorities should contact their regional Strategic Migration Partnership for more advice or if they are interested in participating- contacts below.

Region	Officer lead	Email
East of England	Gosia Strona	Malgorzata.Strona@eelga.gov.uk
East Midlands	Sarah Short	Sarah.Short@emcouncils.gov.uk
London	-	mayor@london.gov.uk
North East	Janine Hartley	Janine_Hartley@middlesbrough.gov.uk
North West	Katy Wood	K.wood@manchester.gov.uk
South East	Roy Millard	RoyMillard@secouncils.gov.uk
South West	Sarah Short	Sarah.Short@swcouncils.gov.uk
Wales	Anne Hubbard	anne.hubbard@wlga.gov.uk
West Midlands	Dally Panesar	Dalvinder.Panesar@birmingham.gov.uk
Yorkshire & Humberside	-	admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk

Your RSMP contacts will pass on relevant information to government and the LGA.

There is a lot of detail still to be worked through. RSMPs can log any queries you may have about how the scheme may be run so we can pass these back to Government. We have been sharing your questions with Government and adding the answers to this page as soon as we receive answers.

We are also supporting a number of events to explore next steps at a regional level, as well as sharing current practice. Contact your regional lead for more information.

The event for the South East region was held on 21 December and presentations from the day can be found [here](#).

If you are an authority who would like to be in contact with experienced experts from other areas which have already taken large numbers, your RSMP can put you in touch.

This scheme builds on the fact that central and local government has been working together to operating resettlement schemes for many years. We want to work with you to collate and share good practice examples from the previous or current scheme. Do contact your RSMPs or info@local.gov.uk with any examples you may have.

2. How will the new arrangements for settling Syrian refugees operate and be funded?

The LGA has been pressing for the Government to confirm that councils will receive additional funding beyond the initial 12 months if they agree to take refugees through this scheme. The Chancellor announced that over £460 million of the overseas aid budget will be used by 2019-20 across the statutory sector to assist with first year costs of resettling up to 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees. Government will provide around a further £130 million by 2019-20 just to local authorities to contribute to the costs of supporting refugees up to their fifth year, including an 'extreme cases' fund that will assist with high cost cases. The Minister has written to all local authorities confirming the funding arrangements.

Local authorities may need to monitor actual costs to be confident that the scheme is adequately funded and the LGA is calling on government needs to commit to a review of costings after 18 months.

We know many local authorities remain keen to participate and we are continuing to work with the Government, RSMPs and Solace on how the detailed arrangements for the next phase will work, building on existing regional arrangements. From January, we expect the scheme to move into a second phase with stronger local government-led co-ordination, building on existing regional coordination.

3. What should you do if you want to participate in the current scheme?

Whilst the expanded scheme is being developed, councils are being invited to take refugees based on the existing scheme. The Minister for resettlement [thanked local Government for welcoming 1000 Syrian refugees](#) before Christmas as part of this.

If you are interested in participating in this first phase, do continue to contact your Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP) listed above. The RSMPs will pass on relevant information to the Home Office so negotiations can begin.

The Home Office also may contact individual local authorities or Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships (RSMPs) directly around possible participation in this first phase of the scheme.

Do contact your RSMPs for any advice or queries before joining the scheme and you may wish to involve your RSMPs in the detail of any negotiation given their expertise.

RSMPs may also be able to work with you on using the offers from other partners made locally and regionally, such as Housing Associations, faith, community and voluntary sector groups.

There will be many considerations which councils will want to take into account in considering participation on the first phase. The below is not a comprehensive list as there are some features of the scheme which are complex, some have still to be clarified and some will be specific to your region or authority. We are working with RSMPs to provide a longer list. Key issues currently include the need:

- for both tiers of local government in 2-tier areas agreeing the approach, as housing, social care, education and wider responsibilities come into play;
- to work with your health, education, care providers, faith, community and voluntary sector partners to identify capacity to support your own work locally;
- to note that the Local Housing Allowance is used to cover housing costs and if the rent paid exceeds the LHA those costs currently cannot be reimbursed through the scheme
- to learning from other areas' experience of supporting new arrivals settle into existing communities;

Any local authority who wants to resettle refugees also must satisfy the Home Office that they have the relevant services and infrastructure in place to deliver the 'statement of requirements'. This sets out exactly what the local authority must deliver under the [scheme](#).

4. How does the current scheme work?

In his statement to the House of Commons on Monday 7 September, the Prime Minister **announced** that Britain should resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over the rest of the Parliament. These refugees will be taken from the camps in the countries neighbouring Syria. The UK has been involved in an existing scheme to resettle Syrian refugees for a couple of years.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will continue to refer people to the scheme. The UK sets the criteria. It currently prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women, children and young

people at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence, refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement countries.

The UNHCR conduct a series of checks including a robust identification process prior to referring a refugee to the UK scheme. Referrals are then further screened and considered by the Home Office for suitability for entry to the UK. The Home Office check they meet eligibility criteria and to carry out medical and security checks. The Home Office retain the right to reject on security, war crimes or other grounds.

By the time a UNHCR referred refugee arrives in the UK they have been through a thorough two-stage vetting process to ensure government knows who is entering the country. This includes the taking of biometrics, documentary evidence and interviews. Security is also regarded as a continual process that does not stop as soon as a refugee arrives in the UK.

Government are working with the LGA, local authorities, UNHCR (the UN's refugee agency) and others to simplify and quicken the means in which families and individuals are processed through the current scheme.

Do look for updates from the government here: [Government announcements](#).

5. What does this mean in practice?

The Home Office pass the cases to a local authority who has asked to participate in the scheme. The referral forms give detail on family make up, age and specific needs. The Local Authority is asked to accept or reject cases, and if it accepts, the local authority then provides details of the estimated costs. If authorities want a particular make up of cases, the Home Office have indicated that should state this and they will do their best to match cases.

The Home Office does not have all the detail of the cases before UNHCR refer them to local authorities. Further detail on any medical needs follows shortly after via a full medical health assessment report. As soon as a local authority have indicated they wish to participate, they will be sent this detailed information.

On accepting a case, local authorities then need to arrange housing, school places etc. In parallel an arrival date would be agreed.

Refugees will be granted a five year humanitarian protection visa. This will entitle them to access to public funds, access to the labour market and the possibility of a family reunion.

The Home Office has indicated that it will seek to ensure an equitable distribution of refugees across the country so that no individual local authority bears a disproportionate share of the burden. It is made clear to refugees before they arrive that they could be resettled anywhere in the UK as part of this programme. It is also made clear that they will be allocated accommodation of the same standard as those available to UK citizens.

We would expect that in vast majority of case refugees will want to stay in the area of the UK in which they have been resettled. However refugees are free to move elsewhere in the UK if they choose. If a refugee and their family wishes to move to another part of the UK after their initial arrival, local authorities may wish to make sure that it is understood that if they leave the area in which they've been resettled they will no longer be entitled to the accommodation that had been allocated and they will no longer have resettlement support in the authority in which they were first placed. They will also be responsible for making their own arrangements for registering with the relevant statutory bodies in their new area. In these circumstances local authorities have no obligation to provide any assistance to help them move. If a refugee continues with their plans to move to another part of the UK, local authorities are asked to notify the local authority that the refugee is planning to move to. Refugees will be told this as part of their pre arrival information as well.

Government is still exploring the impact of this on funding flows, particularly for areas with housing responsibilities.

Refugees arriving in the first months of this scheme are unlikely to include unaccompanied children. Unaccompanied children will be resettled through a scheme designed specifically for their needs. LGA is proposing that unaccompanied children – whichever country they have come from - should be supported through a single national scheme which is being developed separately.

Participation in the scheme will remain voluntary. The scheme will continue to run alongside other resettlement schemes and other asylum procedures.

6. What is the role of the LGA?

The member led LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group is made up of regional member and RSMP representation covering all of the English regions, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland and focuses upon the issues around the asylum, refugee and migration agenda from a local government perspective.

The LGA, via the Task Group, has been involved in discussions with Government and with regions for a long period of time on how to work together to find sustainable

solutions that minimise the pressures on local authorities, local communities and vulnerable individuals.

As well as working on how the scheme will be funded, we are working with government and partners to clarify when this initial short term phase will move to the subsequent long term phase, and what the second phase of the scheme will look like in practice. The LGA view is that a regionally coordinated programme can meet the needs of more people, more quickly whilst minimising the impact on local communities; and utilising and funding central, regional and local governments' strategic and operational expertise and innovative practice.

7. What do we know about asylum seekers, refugees and migrants coming to the country?

Recent information on patterns of migration and asylum can be found here: [Migration Statistics Quarterly Report \(PDF\)](#)

The United Nations Refugee Agency operates the current Syrian resettlement scheme. They have a 'myth busting' resource covering asylum seekers and refugees in the UK: [The Facts: Asylum in the UK](#).

Further information can be found on Refugee Week's [facts about refugees](#).

Those who claim asylum after they arrive in the UK go through a different process than those settled under the scheme.

Those thought to have legitimate claims for asylum and are unable to support themselves are placed into accommodation and given an allowance to live on while their claims are considered. This support is funded by the government. Asylum seekers are dispersed across the UK, apart from London.

Simple claims are aimed to be processed within six months, but there are some complex cases that have lasted for much longer. The majority of decisions are made in favour of granting asylum. Once asylum seekers are given status, they are entitled to work and receive benefits – and if appropriate, apply for housing.

Becoming a dispersal area is voluntary and there are agreed 'cluster limits' in terms of the number of asylum seekers per population that can be placed in any area. More information is available here: [Asylum support page](#) on gov.uk.

The only asylum seekers directly supported by local authorities are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. (Failed asylum seekers may also be supported if they have children or social care needs).

Local authorities' responsibilities for failed asylum seekers is a very complex and contested area of law. More information can be found here: [No Recourse to Public Funds](#) page on Islington Council's website.

Local authorities do provide support for children and young people directly, dependent on where they first claimed asylum. More information can be found here: [Processing an asylum application from a child](#) guidance on gov.uk.

8. What do we say to residents making other offers of help?

You can direct residents to the government website which outlines what individuals can do to help: [Syrian refugees: what you can do to help](#).

For the many other offers (such as local people wanting to make a donation or offer assistance in kind) you may want to direct people to the local and national charities which are offering support to refugees already in the UK.

Significant or substantive offers of assistance can be referred to the Home Office and/or RSMPs. This will ensure that the support provided is tailored to vulnerable people's needs in the most appropriate way.

Government has indicated that at this stage they don't not think there will be a need to host Syrian refugees in homes and they are not asking people to come forward with offers of a spare bedroom. If residents have a property that could be used to house refugees, your private sector housing teams might want to collate the details of these properties in the first instance, so that once we have further information from government on who will be arriving in the UK and when, you can assess whether you can make use of their offer to provide properties. Many organisations in the UK operate accommodation hosting projects to help other vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees.

- See more at: <http://www.local.gov.uk/refugees#sthash.fi3X1WI6.dpuf>