



Resettlement Briefing

9 October 2015

The UK has a long tradition and considerable experience in successfully providing sanctuary to refugees through resettlement programmes. The recent government announcement of a substantial expansion in the resettlement of Syrians follows a huge and inspiring groundswell of public support for welcoming refugees to the UK. This needs to be harnessed in order for the refugees to be welcomed and supported. But with the number the UK has committed to resettle over the next five years being nearly four times greater than the number resettled in over a decade of the Gateway Protection (resettlement) Programme, there is also a need for innovation of existing practices and the development of new models to receive the numbers committed to. This note sets out:

- Refugee Action's experience of resettlement
- What might happen now
- Refugee Action's current model for supporting resettlement
- Six essential components of best practice in resettlement
- What roles the public could have in supporting resettlement
- The provision of accommodation for resettlement
- How to get in touch with us for further information or advice

Refugee Action's Experience

Refugee Action has been the leading charity in Britain supporting the resettlement of refugees for over thirty years. We were established to support refugees fleeing Vietnam in 1979 and supported the resettlement of thousands of refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo in the late 1990's. The primary resettlement programme currently operating in the UK is the Gateway Protection Programme, which has successfully resettled refugees from a wide range of countries through partnerships between Local Authorities and the voluntary sector since 2004.

Refugee Action is currently the largest provider of reception and integration support services for the Gateway programme in the UK. Until recently, our programme accounted for 10% of all the refugees undergoing resettlement in the whole of Europe. We work through a partnership with local authorities. We have played a key role in developing the services delivered to refugees undergoing resettlement – growing the programme from very small numbers in one Local Authority in 2004/05 to significant numbers resettled across a partnership of multiple Local Authorities. The Gateway programme operates in a very similar way to the current small Vulnerable Person Scheme for Syrian refugees, and offers a tried and tested model that could be used for Syrian resettlement.

What might now happen?

Our current expectation is that the expansion of the existing Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) is likely to be the primary means through which resettlement will take place. Whereas the Gateway programme has been funded by the Home Office, with major contributions from the European Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the government has announced that the Department for International Development (DFID) will



fund the VPRS. This will fund the refugees' planned arrival in the UK and the services that support them for the first year after arrival. In existing models, the Home Office contracts formal partnerships to deliver housing and reception and integration support, and funds local Clinical Commissioning Groups, Children and Families Departments and the DWP to cover the costs of healthcare, schools and benefits for the refugees' first years in the UK. Resourced at its current level, the Gateway programme Refugee Action supports has the capacity to receive around 30-35 refugees per week, with one week off in every 3 and currently receives around 470 a year. It is difficult to predict the rate at which refugees might begin to arrive with resettlement through the VPRS being scaled up.

What do we actually do in current refugee resettlement programmes?

Refugee Action liaises with organisations involved in the pre-arrival stages of resettlement such as job centres, health services and local authority school admissions to plan, risk assess and co-ordinate refugee arrivals. We meet the refugees at the airport, accompany them to their new homes and provide intensive support throughout the first week to help them settle in. Post arrival, a Resettlement Worker, with significant volunteer support, is assigned to each adult on the programme. Support is provided by Refugee Action through casework for 9 months and community development and group work for 12 months. Support focuses on integration and encouraging independence and is delivered through home visits, drop-ins, group sessions and joint work with local organisations and volunteers.

The support involves a planned approach, tailored to each individual refugee following a holistic needs assessment which is regularly reviewed and forms a Personal Integration Plan for each adult. Rather than reproducing existing services and segregating refugees, Refugee Action's model has a focus on integration and enhancing existing services and developing communities to support them.

Some refugees have very specific and sometimes highly complex needs which require a strong professional framework of support. We work to ensure they are integrated into the necessary services and we support the services to understand the unique needs of the refugees.

Good Practice

In our experience, there are six essential components of successful resettlement programmes. To meet the needs of refugees rebuild their lives, they must:

- Fund all essential costs such as health, education, community care and English classes
- Set up programmes with a focus on fostering independence and not creating dependency, and front loading support that is tailored to refugees' particular needs.
- Ensure refugees have access to mainstream, community-based housing upon arrival so that they can begin the process of integrating straightaway



- Provide support in a way that helps refugees access existing mainstream services and enhances these services' ability to support the refugees, rather than replicating services or putting additional pressures on them
- Involve long-standing resident communities where refugees settle, through providing information and enabling positive relationships to form
- Enable local people to play a part in supporting refugees, with appropriate training and support

Accommodation

Accommodation is an essential component of any resettlement programme and in schemes to date suitable accommodation has been obtained prior to the refugees arriving. Various accommodation models can be used including the procurement of private and social housing. Some models involve permanent tenancies where-as others involve fixed-term tenancies with support to move on to more permanent accommodation as the fixed-term draws to an end.

The UK resettlement programmes provide direct entry to community based housing upon arrival. Reception centres are not used. Intensive support is frontloaded in the hours and days immediately after arrival to ensure the refugees can live safely and independently within their housing. We do not expect adapting to UK accommodation to be a particular challenge for the Syrian refugees as they are likely to already be familiar with the essential elements of how to live in western-style housing. However, they will have spent significant periods living in temporary shelter, usually in refugee camps, and they will undoubtedly face some challenges.

The suitability of accommodation has to be determined according to the family size, ages, genders and any relevant health conditions or disabilities such as the need for wheelchair accessibility. It has traditionally been more challenging to source accommodation for larger family sizes. With meaningful consent from the refugees prior to arrival, larger families can be split across multiple households. If the distance, travel time and cost of travel between properties are made clear to the family unit, they can decide whether it is practical for them to be split across properties. This enables the refugees to consider practicalities such as for example, the need for younger refugees to care for elderly members of their family.

The role of the public

It is absolutely inspiring to see the huge groundswell of public support for refugee resettlement. Clearly this creates a fantastic opportunity to develop new ways to involve local volunteers and communities in the successful resettlement of Syrian refugees. The role of the public will be determined by the needs of the refugees involved and it should not be seen as an alternative to professional support where it is needed.

Volunteers play an absolutely critical role in our current programmes. The existing volunteer roles within our resettlement programmes include dedicated roles to help refugees:

- Settle in, in the first days in the UK (particularly well suited to people in the local area)
- Understand and navigate the UK jobs market (particularly well suited to people who have a background in a similar occupation)



- Practice conversational English and learn specific elements of English identified as needed for their unique circumstances
- Attend necessary appointments and learning how to carry out specific activities or access mainstream support

There is also a need for the refugees to get to know people locally – both in terms of developing friendships and for turning to for less formal advice and support.

Our Role

- Refugee Action is keen to contribute to the successful design of the new resettlement programme to the UK, with other civil society organisations. It is essential for the UK and for resettled refugees that a best practice approach is taken in any commissioned Syrian programme.
- Refugee Action is ready to work directly in some but not all regions in the UK to support the resettlement of refugees.
- Refugee Action is ready to provide advice and signposting to all local authorities, linking interested local authorities and other organisations to potential partners and providing strategic support and advice where appropriate. There are a huge range of other civil society organisations and NGO's already involved in supporting refugees, including in resettlement.
- You can contact our Syrian Resettlement support team for information, advice, or understanding practice in other areas via resettlement@refugee-action.org.uk