

1. Community Sponsorship

1. What is Community Sponsorship?
2. What are the benefits of Community Sponsorship?
3. What is Resettlement?
4. How is Community Sponsorship different from other forms of resettlement?

What is Community Sponsorship?

Community Sponsorship is an innovative model of refugee resettlement which offers ordinary people and communities in Ireland an extraordinary opportunity to directly help refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and settle into their new communities.

Community Sponsorship was pioneered in Canada in the 1970s. We know from almost four decades of the programme's success there that it is hugely positive for the lives of both refugees and local communities.

Community Sponsorship empowers individuals and communities to come together and take the lead in resettling refugees in their local areas. Community groups support refugees with all the things that enable a person to settle into a new community – things like helping with finding employment, connecting to social services, enrolling in schools, and introducing families to local public transport and amenities.

Sponsors commit to providing financial, emotional and settlement support to help newcomers as they settle into their new communities. Community sponsorship creates lasting bonds between new members of the community and their neighbours. In doing so, it strengthens communities and builds awareness of broader refugee-related issues.

Community sponsorship is a sustainable and inspiring way for people in Ireland to welcome refugees and offers the chance to make a real difference to people affected by war and persecution.

What are the benefits of Community Sponsorship?

Community Sponsorship is a practical and powerful way for communities in Ireland to respond to the global refugee crisis. Community sponsorship mobilises the energy, compassion and expertise which already exists in local communities across Ireland, enabling them to support and empower refugees as they rebuild their lives in safety.

For refugees arriving in Ireland, sponsorship provides a ready-made network of support. Sponsors help refugees navigate their new communities and overcome any challenges they may face. Having a community supporting them as soon as they arrive helps refugees to get settled in quicker and build fulfilling and meaningful lives for themselves.

Community Sponsorship is also hugely rewarding for local communities. Sponsors often say it is the most meaningful thing they have ever done.

Sponsorship brings together people from different backgrounds to work towards a common goal: welcoming and supporting newcomers to their community. Time and again, we see communities strengthened and transformed through this life-changing experience.

Community involvement with the programme also helps to build greater awareness, understanding and empathy around refugee-related issues locally and nationally.

What is Resettlement?

Resettlement is the process through which refugees living outside their home country are transferred to another country where they are granted long term residency. To be eligible for resettlement, refugees must be unable to return safely to their home country and either be at risk, or have no prospects of integrating, in the country they currently live in. As the number of resettlement places needed far surpasses the number available, UNHCR prioritises cases for resettlement based on need and vulnerability.

State participation in resettlement is voluntary, and it is national governments that select which of the refugees referred to them will be offered permanent places of residence in their countries. The status provided by the resettlement state ensures protection against *return to* their country of origin where they will be at risk of persecution. The resettled refugee and his/her family or dependents will be provided with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalised citizen of the resettlement country.

How is Community Sponsorship different from other forms of resettlement?

Refugees coming through the Resettlement programme are initially accommodated in an Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre (EROC) where they are likely to reside for a number of months. During this period they will receive English classes and supports. They are then resettled nationally once suitable housing becomes available.

Refugees referred to the Community Sponsorship programme, upon arrival, will go directly to the community where they will reside and immediately begin the process of settlement. Under community sponsorship, private citizens and community organisations, rather than government officials, become the face of welcome for resettled refugees arriving to their country; supporting them through the process by providing a range of social and emotional supports, as well as providing accommodation, assisting in learning the language and seeking employment, enrolling in schools and any other necessary supports. Through the establishment of a Community Sponsorship programme in Ireland, communities will for the first time be supported to provide direct assistance to refugees settling in their locality through a structured programme backed by a unique collaboration between government, UNHCR, NGOs and civil society.

2. Sponsors

1. What are the responsibilities of a Community Sponsorship Group?
2. Who can submit a community sponsorship application?
3. What skills and competencies are needed in a community sponsorship group?
4. How long is the Community Sponsorship Group commitment?
5. What are the financial commitments of the community sponsorship group?

What are the responsibilities of a Community Sponsorship Group?

Community Sponsorship Groups commit to providing support for a refugee family for a period of 18 months. Sponsors meet the refugee or refugee family in the airport on day one to welcome them to Ireland and bring them to their new home, help them to get set up and provide initial orientation.

Sponsors are responsible for helping with things like finding employment, connecting to social services, and enrolling in schools. They are also responsible for helping with other things such as sourcing language lessons or translation services if required and introducing families to local public transport and amenities.

The Group is responsible for sourcing suitable accommodation, available to the family for at least two years.

In advance of the family's arrival, Community Sponsorship Groups are required to:

- Attend relevant training;
- Undergo Garda vetting;
- Develop a plan for how they will support the family;
- Fundraise €10,000 to contribute to these supports.

Financial and non-financial support contributed by sponsors can include:

- Exceptional needs or specialist costs for physical, mental and/or dental health
- Transport
- Interpretation / Translation
- Language training
- Housing
- Employment preparation and job seeking
- Start-up needs such as household supplies and furnishings
- Clothing
- Cultural and social activities
- Access to religious activities
- Access to education

Who can submit a Community Sponsorship application?

Participation in community sponsorship is voluntary and applications are open to all kinds of community groups, including local community groups, faith groups, businesses, neighbourhoods, and charities.

What skills and competencies are needed in a Community Sponsorship Group?

Community sponsorship groups will need to show either that members of the group have the relevant experience or expertise, or that they have linked with others and organisations in their area who can provide it. Necessary or useful skills and competencies include:

- Finance – budgeting, accounting, etc.
- Child safeguarding knowledge and designation – either as a Mandated Person or Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- Ability to act as, or to access, interpreters (most often Arabic to English).
- English language tuition e.g. ESOL qualifications.
- Experience as a health practitioner.
- Local authority experience and/or contacts.
- Knowledge of or connections to organisations or groups specialising in supporting refugees or asylum seekers, social inclusion or local development.

- Ability to find employment or training opportunities for the refugee families.
- Knowledge of or connections to places of worship, cultural centres, refugee support groups

How long is the Community Sponsorship Group commitment?

Community Sponsorship Groups will be expected to commit to sponsor a refugee family for a period of eighteen months and to ensure that housing is secured for a minimum period of two years. Sponsoring means the Community Sponsorship Group will provide all necessary supports to the family during the initial period of their resettlement in Ireland and assist the family's successful integration into your community.

What are the financial commitments of the Community Sponsorship Group?

Sponsors will be required to demonstrate that they have a minimum of €10,000 on hand to support a sponsored family, of which a maximum of €2,000 may be in-kind contributions (e.g. a commitment given to provide professional interpretation services, English classes, child care etc. free of charge). Refugees are entitled to access a range of social welfare benefits on the basis of the same eligibility criteria as Irish citizens. In the first few months after arrival, the family will typically require a range of financial supports and expenses such as food, medical expenses, clothing, supports for education such as books and school uniforms etc. Refugees may qualify for supplementary or discretionary welfare schemes, such as the exceptional needs payments, but Community Sponsorship Groups are expected to demonstrate that they have fully considered the needs and requirements of the family and to plan financial needs accordingly. Additional funding may also be required to ensure that the refugee family can participate fully, to the extent they wish to, in local society and community activities.

3. Refugees

1. Who is a refugee?
2. What rights do state refugees have?
3. Who is eligible to be resettled via the Community Sponsorship Programme?
4. How is a match made between a sponsoring group and a refugee family?

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who has fled their country due to the presence or threat of persecution, conflict or serious human rights violations, and cannot return as a result of this danger.

In such circumstances, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, may refer their cases to other countries that consider admitting them by way of resettlement to enable them to restart and rebuild their lives in a safe and stable environment.

Anybody arriving in Ireland through Community Sponsorship will have been recognised as a refugee by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and gone through a vetting process overseen by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP).

What rights do state refugees have?

Refugees resettled to Ireland under the community sponsorship programme have the following rights:

- Permission to reside in Ireland

- Permission to seek and enter employment
- Permission to access education and training
- Permission to receive medical care and social welfare benefits
- Permission to apply to for Irish citizenship following three years of residence.

For more information see the International Protection Act 2015.

Who is eligible to be resettled via the Community Sponsorship Programme?

Referrals to Community Sponsorship Ireland will be made via existing procedures already in place for the government managed resettlement programme. Persons eligible for this programme will be refugees who currently reside outside of Ireland and who have been identified by UNHCR and accepted by the Irish Government as individuals who are in need of resettlement. The individuals selected will also be asked to agree to participate in this programme and to provide written consent to share basic information with sponsors in order to be part of a Community Sponsorship Programme. Resettled refugees being referred currently by UNHCR to the Irish resettlement programme are all living in Lebanon, the vast majority of whom are Syrian nationals. This may be subject to change in the future by agreement between UNHCR and the government.

If an application is approved, how is a match made between a sponsoring group and a refugee family?

The Irish Government and UNHCR will have responsibility for selecting refugee families who are eligible and suitable for this programme. A successful sponsorship application will be met with a quick turnaround by the Irish state to ensure the speedy arrival of the refugees into Ireland so as to take advantage of the community resources prepared. Where an application has been approved, subject to housing, the matching process may take place prior to housing being secured but the Community Sponsorship Group will be expected to provide further details and documentation as required so as to co-ordinate this process with the Department of Justice and Equality and to ensure that appropriate accommodation will be in place in time for the family's arrival.

A refugee family will be matched to the Community Sponsorship Group by the Department of Justice and Equality on the basis of criteria such as:

- The needs of the family (health, medical, educational, employment opportunities etc.)
- The proposed settlement plan set out by the community sponsorship group and how it may address and meet the needs of the refugee family.
- The size of accommodation available in that location to meet the size of the proposed family.

4. Application Process

1. I'm interested in applying, what are the next steps?
2. What is the application process?
3. What is a Settlement Plan?
4. What do community sponsorship groups need to consider in order to submit an application?
5. What supports are available to community sponsorship groups?

I'm interested in applying, what are the next steps?

If you would like to apply to become a sponsor under the Community Sponsorship Programme, the first thing to do is to find like-minded individuals who wish to apply with you and to contact a Regional Support Organisation (RSO). An RSO is a sponsorship support organisation who will provide training advice and guidance and support you to develop your application.

What is the application process?

1. Individuals come together to form a Community Sponsorship Group; nominate a primary and secondary sponsor and determine who the other members of the group will be.
2. Register initial expression of interest with an RSO.
3. Complete and submit to the RSO a detailed application form which will include clear plans for fundraising and a sponsorship undertaking whereby all members of the group commit to meet the obligations of the programme.
4. Participate in training to be arranged by the RSO.
5. Complete and submit to your RSO a detailed settlement plan. Where housing is not available at the time of completion the plan should set out how this requirement is intended to be met at a later date. A Child Safeguarding Statement and proof of completion of the E-Learning Programme must also be submitted along with your settlement plan.

What is a Settlement Plan?

The settlement plan outlines the details of how a community sponsor group will deliver settlement support and services to the refugee family who will be resettled. The *Guidance for Sponsors' Settlement Planning* is a guide that helps community sponsorship groups develop a robust plan which will, in turn, help throughout the settlement process.

The plan covers the basics of what will need to be done to welcome and support a refugee family. It details how each group proposes to meet the outcomes and requirements including;

- A home of their own, of an acceptable standard, furnished and with adequate facilities.
- School places for the children.
- Appropriate interpreting services, as required.
- Arrival day plans, and a comprehensive welcome and support plan for the first week.
- Accessing Social Welfare Payments and eligibility for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and providing financial support to the family until the Social Welfare payments are in place.
- Opening a bank account.
- Signing on with a GP, dentist and other medical services.
- English language training, both formal (ESOL training and qualifications) and informal (conversation sessions).

What do community sponsorship groups need to consider in order to submit an application?

In order to submit an application a community sponsorship group must consider and demonstrate the following:

- That the group is comprised of a minimum core group of five people (a primary and secondary sponsor and a minimum of three additional support personnel), all of whom must be over 18.
- Each member of the group must be legally resident in Ireland.
- Each group will need to register with their local RSO who will advise you in preparing the application and be available to provide help and support throughout the sponsorship period.

- Community Sponsorship Group support personnel are people who will play a regular or significant role in the delivery of settlement supports to the family. While friends and family may also help on an occasional basis, it's important for safe-guarding reasons that you identify everyone you anticipate will be playing a regular or significant role in the delivery of supports.
- Each group should include individuals with a range of skill sets so that a varied level of experience is covered. For example, someone with experience in education, employment, financial supports and someone who has experience in working in an intercultural context or supporting vulnerable people would all be beneficial. In your settlement plan you will be asked to designate who has responsibility for each area.
- Each group must attend training provided by their RSO.
- Each group must commit to raising a minimum of €10,000 to support a sponsored family, of which a maximum of €2,000 may be in-kind contributions.
- Each group must consider in their application what fundraising efforts will be deployed.

What supports are available to community sponsorship groups?

To ensure sponsors are well prepared to take on the responsibilities of their engagement, each Community Sponsorship Group will be required to align themselves with a Regional Support Organisation. RSOs provide training and support to community sponsorship groups during the application process and, if approved, in the delivery of resettlement support throughout the sponsorship period. RSOs are responsible for educating potential sponsors on the sponsorship process and helping community sponsorship groups in the development of their settlement plans. RSOs will also provide on-going support to sponsors prior to, during and following the arrival of the refugees, assist in the resolution of issues which may arise between the refugee family and their sponsors.

5. Cairde – the Allies Network

1. What is the Open Community?
2. What is Cairde?
3. What are examples of possible engagement?
4. What benefits are there to partners?
5. How can Cairde benefit the wider community?
6. What does Cairde mean or why call it Cairde?
7. Is there a need for Cairde?
8. Who is funding Cairde?
9. Can an individual help or volunteer?
10. How much time will I have to give?
11. How much will it cost a business to support Cairde?

What Is The Open Community?

The Open Community oversee and support communities to assist refugee families to resettle here and find safety and a new life. They use a collaborative approach to helping those arriving from other countries to become part of the fabric of Ireland, working with all sectors of society to enhance integration so that both the families and communities thrive.

What Is Cairde?

Cairde – the Allies Network is a partner organisation of The Open Community. It is run by The Open Doors Initiative with the purpose of creating links with key areas of Irish society such as business, education, sports, the religious and other groups who can leverage their connections to enable families to integrate. This can be by a number of ways and we encourage innovative and creative thinking. The North Star is to welcome families and help them create a home from home.

Examples of Possible Engagement

- **Business**
Offer employment of different types to workers on merit. Help fund community sponsorship groups. Include Community Sponsorship as part of your CSR commitments e.g. Commit volunteer days to community sponsorship activities. Promote Community Sponsorship across your employees and/or community networks to encourage the formation of new collaborations for families. Provide pro bono industry or sector expertise and funding. Help your community to support a refugee family.
 - **e.g. Banking** - Create dedicated bank accounts available to CSG and refugees
 - **Insurance** - Design a specific policy that provides protection to CSGs
- **Sporting Associations**
Provide access to existent community networks. Engage families with sporting activities and training.
- **Education/training**
Support employment training supports and other training opportunities. Help the transfer of existing educational achievements.
- **Charity sector**
Access volunteers and existing community development skills.
- **Other engagements**
We are open to innovative and lateral approaches to helping.

What benefits are there to Cairde Partners?

- Development of team building.
- New skills imbued in the workforce at all levels - leadership, coordination, communication, fundraising, social marketing and budgeting skills.
- An enhanced sense of social purpose and CSR opportunities.
- A new collaborative approach to community engagement.
- Growth of multigenerational networks both in and outside of the organisation.

- Possible new employees from diverse backgrounds with lateral thinking, creativity and resilience.

How can Cairde benefit the wider community?

Cultural integration and understanding beyond the partners and participants, in the wider community, will come out of this project. As more people work and live with people from other communities, there will be a natural learning evolving between all groups. This presents an opportunity for communities to learn about new cultures and their practices and take the best of these and apply them here in Ireland. It also prevents segregation and the build up of 'ghettos' and the misunderstandings that can arise from this type of practice when it comes to introducing new people into an area. It is a real opportunity to welcome, learn and integrate in a beneficial way for all.

What does Cairde mean or why call it Cairde?

Cairde is the Irish word for friendship and through this work, we hope to nurture friendships with people coming to live in Ireland, who have had extreme difficulties in life and are here to start anew, with support from Irish people.

Is there a need for Cairde?

The Open Community strives to use community bonds to help people make a new life. These are people from all walks of life, with varied skills and interests. These can be brought together to help families form a stable and new home, integrated into Irish society. Cairde has the means of bringing people together to help these people, from all over Ireland. Every contribution, big and small, can help and will go towards helping people start a safe new life here. It also creates a network of skills and aids that can strengthen existing communities and help them work with others in the same locality and take learnings from others nationally. Everyone who takes part, benefits.

Who is funding Cairde?

Funding is coming from the European AMIF fund. We are also hoping to have sponsors from the various communities such as business and government, to aid with any costs that might arise. As it is an online community in the first instance, costs will be extremely low and all monies raised will go directly to the groups supporting families.

Can an individual help or volunteer?

Depending on where you are situated in the country, we can link you in with a local group, which is supporting a family. Alternatively, you can start your own group. There are supports and resources to help you with this throughout the country. Please contact: www.theopencommunity.ie for further information on how you can get involved.

How much time will I have to give?

This is entirely up to you and the level of support you want to offer. It can be as large as running a group or as small as offering to help with shopping. It can grow over time as much as you want or taper off as the family becomes self-sufficient. All offers to help are gratefully received and there are many benefits for those who engage on a personal and community basis.

How much will it cost a business to support Cairde?

This depends on what level of support the business and its employees want to give. There is a myriad of ways to help. You can start a group within your organisation and help with funding for activities, such as English lessons or sporting equipment for example. You can lend professional expertise such as legal or financial etc. You can align with your company values in terms of what type of business you are. We are willing to sit with any company and work out engagement that best fits.