



Falmouth & Penryn Welcome Refugee Families
registered charity no. 1181196

(We often call our group just '**Welcome**' because it takes too long to say the whole official name every time!)

A group of friends started this charity at the beginning of 2018 as a response to the growing global migration crisis and our government's response. We all signed petitions, and some people went to help in the 'Jungle' in Calais, but we all wanted to be able to make a bigger difference in our home county, Cornwall.

These are our *Charitable Aims*:

1) To resettle families fleeing war and climate change within our local area via the Community Sponsorship scheme, and to support them to achieve financial and social independence within their new community.

2) To help existing refugees living in the local area via additional educational and social opportunities.

We found out about the Community Sponsorship scheme because there was another group in Bude in the far north of Cornwall, who had resettled two families. Bude is a much smaller town than Falmouth, and we felt strongly that Falmouth ought to be doing this too! It took a while to get started:

- **8 months** to become a legally registered charity. This was required so that we could raise money and have a bank account in the charity's name, and be accountable to the public for how we use the money.
- **12 months** to gather enough volunteers with the right skills
- **18 months** to raise the £9000 required to submit a Resettlement Application
- **20 months** to find a suitable property

- **22 months** to welcome the first family

Community Sponsorship in the UK

More than 70 million people are displaced across the world. The UK Government has committed to resettling just 5000 refugees from 2020-2021. The UK Community Sponsorship scheme was set up by the government in 2016 in response to communities and faith leaders who said that they wanted to do more to help. It is an international scheme based on a model that existed in Canada for many years. It's a unique programme enabling a group of ordinary people to welcome a refugee family into their local area and support them as they rebuild their lives.

It's the only programme that works **in addition** to the number of refugees able to access safe and legal routes to resettlement in the UK. If every town in the UK had a community sponsorship group with 2 families in their care the overall UK refugee resettlement programme would double in size.

In the UK the legal requirement is for Community Sponsorship groups to:

- Find and furnish an affordable home for a refugee family for a minimum period of 2 years.
- Raise at least £9,000 (to cover various costs like translation, furnishing the house, and English classes)
- Welcome the family at the airport and settle them in their new community (helping them register for benefits, access health services and enroll children in schools)
- Provide support and encouragement to the family for one year so that they can live securely and independently

RESET is the UK's Community Sponsorship training provider. All Community Sponsorship Groups must be trained by RESET in order for the Home Office to approve an application to resettle a refugee family. They are funded by the government and additional charitable organisations to provide a lot of advice and learning resources, and monitor the wellbeing of both groups and resettled families during their first year in the UK.

Who are Welcome?

Welcome is managed by a group of trustees and many other volunteers.

Charity trustees are the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing a **charity** and directing how it is managed and run, through regular meetings and conversations.

Our **Trustees** are:

Jude Munden

Caroline Cox

Laura Lay

Steve Bond

Linda Coles

Elaine Johnson

Sue Topf

Glyn Winchester

Our **Volunteers** are the people who have face to face contact with resettled families, and have a range of different roles. We split these roles into two main groups, **Befrienders** and **ESOL Teachers**. All of our ESOL and Befriender volunteers are DBS-checked (a scheme which ensures no one with a criminal record can work without that information being known by the charity) and undergo Safeguarding and Prevent Training which teaches them how to respond correctly and safely to a range of situations that may affect the wellbeing of the resettled families.

All of our **Trustees** are also **Volunteers**. All of our **Trustees** and some of our **Volunteers** are also **Board Members** which means they attend regular meetings to make decisions, and also hold special responsibilities within the group.

Here is a list of **Board Members** and their special roles:

- **Jude Munden** Chair
- **Caroline Cox** Vice Chair, Housing Lead, Volunteer Support & Recruitment Team, Safeguarding
- **Laura Lay** Secretary, Complaints Officer, Finance Team, Data Protection
- **Steve Bond** Treasurer
- **Liz Benson** School Lead
- **Linda Coles** Befriender Support, Volunteer Support & Recruitment
- **Andrew Collinson** Family 3
- **Lilyan Isaac**
- **Elaine Johnson** Health & Wellbeing Lead and Safeguarding
- **Taziri Lilli**
- **Sandie Martyn**
- **Rufus Maurice** Events and fundraising
- **Alan Munden** Housing Team and Landlord #1
- **Anna Retallack** Housing, Volunteer Support & Recruitment, Landlord #2 and Safeguarding.
- **Hannah Stephens**
- **Sue Topf** ESOL Lead, Volunteer Support & Recruitment

- **Chris Ward** Benefits and Employment Support Lead
- **Glyn Winchester** Events, Fundraising and Social Media

Sinead Hanks is our part time Development Officer.

We have a team of **ESOL Teachers** and a team of **Befrienders**.

Being a **Volunteer** means that you want to help an organisation without being paid. Except for our part time Development Officer, no-one who is a part of **Welcome** receives any money and gives their time freely because they are committed to the work that **Welcome** does. Some volunteers are retired, some are students and some have jobs.

We are always seeking new members to help us with our work, especially as we are now welcoming our third family in October 2023. New members join for a number of reasons - they may already know someone in the group, or have previous experience of Community Sponsorship elsewhere. Or they may have seen us at a fundraising event (like a jumble sale) and learnt about community sponsorship and then decided to join us.

The responsibilities of a Community Sponsorship group

When we first formed as a group, we received training from RESET to help us understand our responsibilities and to be able to carry them out. Our primary roles for general support in the first year are the following:

- To create a welcoming home environment for a new family to arrive into to help families to navigate the UK Benefits system
- To help with practical needs such as arranging phone contracts and utilities bills
- To ensure children have school places
- To help families communicate with essential services
- To provide a lot of initial interpretation, and then enough ongoing interpretation to help families to feel a part of their local community
- To ensure that families health needs are met
- To provide a minimum of 8hrs/week of ESOL teaching. This needs to continue for at least a year or until a refugee has reached what's called Entry Level 3 (whichever is the sooner)
- To help adults to access employment at the first opportunity

All Community Sponsorship groups have made a legal obligation to provide the support listed above only during the first 12 months of a family's resettlement period. The property that the families first live in is required to be guaranteed for the first 2 years.

Welcome made their own decision to extend the periods of commitment for both Year 1 (general support) and Year 2 (housing security) as we felt that more support would greatly benefit any resettled family. All families supported by **Welcome** will receive general support (as listed above for Year 1) for **TWO YEARS** and security of accommodation for **THREE YEARS**.

Moving out of Cornwall

If a family we support decides that they would like to move to another area of the UK, we would help the family research their decision thoroughly and to make contact with support organisations in the new area who might be useful to them. However the family would no longer be supported by the Community Sponsorship agreement if they move out of the geographic area they were initially resettled to. Welcome would no longer have any formal duty of care, practical or financial. The family's legal refugee status would be unchanged, and they would still have the same right to benefits, healthcare and education, but there would be no formal structure of other support and it would not be possible for them to be 're-sponsored' by another group in the new area. So the decision to move would also need to be effectively expressing that the family felt confident and independent enough to make this choice to act alone going forward.

Working towards independence

In our training from RESET there has been great emphasis placed on ensuring that our support always builds the empowerment of refugee families, and that every action we take should have this intent at its core. *Basically our entire purpose is to make ourselves redundant!* Sometimes this might mean that we make decisions not to help families around certain issues, or to help in a different way than is being asked. This might sometimes put strain on relationships or make the families feel less supported.

Examples of this could be:

- Showing the family member how to do something, rather than just doing it
- Not giving extra money but showing how to get something within their budget
- Directing the family member to other organisations that are available to all, not just refugees
- Encouraging use of public transport over lifts from befrienders
- Using English instead of a translate app

We want to make it easy for families to both understand and question our decisions and also understand how to make a complaint if they feel unfairly treated.

Welcome and Money

Everything we do is only possible because of the generosity of the community we live in. This community provides the money and the volunteers we need. Public fundraising events achieve two things:

- Make the charity visible, so we get more people talking about the issues around refugees both locally and globally
- Raise much needed funds which allow us to do the work we do.

We know that in many places in the world money raised by charities is often misused or mismanaged. In the UK there is an organisation called the Charity Commission and all registered charities are accountable to them and the public. This is to ensure that all money raised is used correctly and honestly for the purposes stated at the top of this document, and is never used secretly to benefit the wrong people. We are happy to make our accounts publicly available at any time necessary.

Community Sponsorship and other Resettlement Schemes

Many of the families living in the South West have been resettled through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). This operates very differently from Community Sponsorship, although all families have the same legal refugee status. VPRS families have had to be more self-reliant from the beginning as less social support was available to them. Sometimes this means they have lots of valuable experience in navigating local services. But sometimes this can also mean that they have not been given all of the necessary information to make the right decisions.

We also think it could be very useful for us to find ways to link the families we support with other families in the UK who are also being supported by Community Sponsorship groups. It would be a great way to share more knowledge and make new contacts in new areas of the UK. Some of these families will have been here for longer and so might also be able to offer useful guidance for future plans regarding work, language and general wellbeing.

Community Sponsorship and and Family Reunification

At present, the UK does not operate a 'naming' system whereby refugees already in the UK can apply to bring in family members or friends through sponsorship. Any refugee from the Syrian conflict has to be selected for resettlement by the UNHCR before the UK will consider resettling them here, *and that includes through sponsorship*. So the choice of which refugees get to come to the UK through community sponsorship is made by the UN and the UK government not by sponsoring groups or Sponsor Refugees.

Welcome understands that all of the resettled families we support are likely to have family members living abroad in difficult circumstances, and that they feel a great responsibility to seek any opportunity to help their loved ones, just as we would. We understand that they may continue to want to ask us for help with this, even though we have explained that we are powerless to help, just in case things have changed since we wrote this document. We have no control or power to help with family reunification, but we share your pain and frustration with the inhumane government systems we are forced

to comply with.