

Lambeth Refugees Welcome

The plight of those involved in the conflict in Syria and the resulting refugee crisis has touched us all. Citizens UK has been at the forefront of trying to respond locally and nationally.

Lambeth Council has agreed to resettle 20 families from the camps around Syria as well as unaccompanied children from mainland Europe. If you would like to join our Lambeth Refugee Welcome team, contact our organiser James on james.asfa@citizensuk.org.

Here are some ways in which you can help support that welcome, and help those who are still waiting to come:

The most urgent thing is good housing: We are looking for landlords willing to house refugee families.

- The properties must be self-contained and have their own front door
- Landlords will be paid local housing allowance rates You will be paid at Local Housing Allowance rates which vary depending on location (for most of Lambeth this £204 p/w for a 1 bed property, £265 p/w for a 2 bed property, £330 p/w for a 3 bed property and £414.02 p/w for a 4 bed property)
- The families have leave to remain and the right to work so will be good tenants.

If you are a landlord or would like to help find landlords contact james.asfa@citizensuk.org or see <https://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/calling-landlords/>

If you have a spare room and could temporarily host a refugee that has made it to the UK please register your interest at www.refugeesathome.org

Mentoring/ befriending: The families coming here will need support to get to know their local area, build confidence, access services and develop new skills. In this way, they can build happier lives in the UK. <https://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/mentor/>

Donations of household goods: The new families' houses will be part-furnished but they will need many day-to-day items such as bedding and kitchen items If you would like to provide some items let us know and we can tell you what is currently needed.

Private Sponsorship and Community Support

As well as the 20 families that will be resettled by Lambeth Council, it is possible for faith and community groups to privately sponsor Syrian refugees. Refugees Welcome (powered by Citizens UK) has details of how local groups can privately sponsor a refugee to build a new life in the UK. This involves raising money for their material needs for 12 months, around £4.5k for an adult or £9k for a family. See <https://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/sponsorship> for more information. In addition, befriending and on going support, as above, would be expected. Private sponsorship has been happening in Canada for 25 years and so far more than 250,000 refugees have been resettled there as a result.

Unaccompanied children

Under an amendment to the recent Immigration Act, refugee children who are currently in mainland Europe and are under 13 or orphans or females under 18 or boys from 13 to 17 at the discretion of the government, can come to the UK to claim asylum provided a local authority will support them.

So far NO children have come here although Safe Passage (powered by Citizens UK) has identified over 200 legally eligible children in Calais alone and several local authorities, including Lambeth, have agreed to look after some of them.

- You could write to your MP or the Home Secretary urging them to expedite the safe passage of these children to the UK. See UNICEF petition below. To make an even bigger impact, go and see your MP at a constituency surgery – this will have a far bigger effect. In London, most MPs are on board, so if you have a link to constituencies outside London, then please try to lobby those MPs.
- Foster families are also needed. If you can help a child or know someone who fosters please contact Lambeth council HFarr@lambeth.gov.uk Or see <https://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/welcome-4/> or <http://www.homeforgood.org.uk/respond/>
- There are also about 180 children in Calais who have families here but are being transferred very slowly with help from lawyers in Safe Passage. Again you could write to the Home Secretary urging her to expedite this process.
- All this work is time consuming and expensive. Please Donate to the work of Safe Passage: you can make cheques out to Citizens UK (marking "Safe Passage" on the back) and send to 112 Cavell Street, London E1 2JA or donate via the Safe Passage website
https://citizensnew-citizens.nationbuilder.com/donate_to_safe_passage
- If you are a lawyer, or can speak Arabic, Farsi or Pashto, you could volunteer your time and your skills with Safe Passage <http://safepassage.org.uk/>

General help for refugees

There is a continuing need for volunteer support and funds in Calais and elsewhere

- For more information on Help Refugees and how you can help with your time, skills or funds please see <http://www.helprefugees.org.uk/>

There is an ongoing need for funds to support all this work. If you or a group of friends or colleagues have ideas and are able to help then please contact James Asfa james.asfa@citizensuk.org.

FAQs about renting your property to Syrian refugee family

Why do we need privately rented homes for Syrian refugees?

Britain has committed to taking 20,000 refugees from refugee camps around Syria and Lambeth Council has pledged to take 20 families into the borough. That is a challenge for our borough as there is an acute shortage of housing. We don't want to make this a choice between giving social housing to local people who need it and giving it to vulnerable refugees – so we're looking for private landlords who are willing to rent houses or flats to the refugee families.

Do we have space for refugees in the Lambeth?

We are only taking about very modest numbers of refugee families, just 20 families. This builds on Lambeth's tradition of being an open, welcoming borough. As the people arriving with have refugee status, they will be in a position to work and contribute to our borough immediately.

Who are the families?

The families are vulnerable Syrian refugees currently in refugee camps around Syria. The families are selected and security vetted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and are, often due to medical reasons of one of the members of the family, deemed to be unable to remain in the camps safely. When cases are submitted by the UNHCR to the Home Office for consideration for resettlement in the UK, they are screened for a second time by the Home Office to determine whether they are suitable for entry into the country.

How long do I need to be willing to rent out a home for?

12 months minimum. To offer increased stability for the refugees as they settle into their new community we are asking that wherever possible landlords consider renting their properties to refugees for at least 2 years.

How much rent will I be paid?

You will be paid at Local Housing Allowance rates which vary depending on location. For most of Lambeth this £204 p/w for a 1 bed property, £265 p/w for a 2 bed property, £330 p/w for a 3 bed property and £414.02 p/w for a 4 bed property. The rent will be paid to landlords directly and will be guaranteed. This is likely to be around 80 – 90% of market rate. In exceptional cases, Lambeth Council may be able to make an 'incentive' payment to make it financially viable.

Can I rent just one room?

For resettled Syrian refugees, the Home Office (on UN advice) only allows accommodation that has its own front door. This is important to protect vulnerable people. If you have a spare room and would like to use it to help refugees, you can sign up at <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/calling-landlords/> to be linked to NAACOM, who organise spare rooms for destitute asylum seekers already in the UK.

How long will it take to organise for a Syrian refugee to be in my home, and what do I do if I currently have a tenant but would like to help in future?

Each refugee needs to have a home agreed before they move to the UK – and they will only be resettled once that has been organised. Once we have found property, Lambeth Council will contact the Home Office who will arrange with the UN for a suitable family to be resettled. This process should take 6 weeks.

I'm interested! What's next?

Please email the Lambeth Citizens Community Organiser James Asfa at james.asfa@citizensuk.org or text/ring on 07739914225 and he will connect you to the relevant council officers.