

Community Sponsorship Stakeholder Group

Meeting 4: Summary of Proceedings

8th October 2019, 1:30pm-4:00pm; 2 Marsham Street, SW1P 4DF

The Community Sponsorship Stakeholder Group brings together the experience and expertise of a range of stakeholder perspectives from across society.

If you have any questions, please contact director@resetuk.org.

OVERVIEW

Attendees:

Gideon Winward, Home Office (Co-Chair)

Phil Arnold, British Red Cross (Co-Chair)

Monika Kruesmann, Reset (Secretariat)

Gemma Barlow, Home Office

Jane Kennedy, Home Office

Emmeline Skinner Cassidy, Reset

Cathryn Morgan, Ceredigion County Council

Nadine Daniel, Church of England

Phil McCarthy, Caritas Social Action

Katie-Lee Flanagan, the Syrian Charities and Associations Network

Karen Smith, Community Sponsorship Group

Joanna Sherring, Community Sponsorship Group

Kelly-Anne Phillips, South West SMP

Anne Hubbard, Wales SMP

Jill Rutter, British Future

Dennis Cole, GRSI

Jennifer Bond, GRSI

Gregory Maniatis, Open Society Foundations

Alexander Johnston, Canadian High Commission

Debbie Murphy, Northern Ireland Executive Office

Apologies:

John Delahunty, Innisfree Housing Association; Bekele Woyecha, Sponsor Refugees; Alyson Francis, Welsh Government; Jackie Walder, Scottish Government; Gayle Findlay, COSLA.

PROCEEDINGS

1. Community Sponsorship (CS) updates from Reset

It was noted that the number of CS applications is down in comparison to the same time last year.

2. Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI)

The GRSI is an organization that exists to foster a worldwide movement of private sponsorship of refugees. The GRSI asked attendees how it could best support the CS scheme in the UK. Attendees suggested that support with sourcing interpreters once the CS scheme becomes part of the new global resettlement scheme would be useful.

3. Findings from the Home Office's post-2020 CS scheme survey

The Home Office presented the main findings to the group, including that: on average, respondents said that CS could realistically resettle 500 refugees per year; more than 90% of Groups had support from Reset or one of Reset's partners; there was a range of views on how long Groups should be supporting the refugees they sponsor.

4. Contact Theory

Jill Rutter from British Future gave a presentation on contact theory, which suggests that increasing contact between non-migrants and migrants positively influences non-migrants' views on immigration. Jill Rutter suggested that CS Groups should focus on ensuring that they facilitate contact between their communities and refugees. Attendees were broadly in agreement but raised the issue of negative backlash from some communities and the importance of respecting the privacy of refugees resettled through CS.

5. Overcoming the housing barrier

Reset outlined findings from research into the housing of sponsored refugees through CS: Groups are using a wide variety of housing types; the private rented sector (PRS) is the most commonly used by CS Groups; one third of Groups are 'topping up' the refugee family's rent. The issues that CS Groups bring to Reset regularly are: housing not being sustainable beyond 2 years; Group members acting as landlords; refugees feeling disappointed with the quality of the housing; and difficulties finding housing. Reset's current thinking is that the most serious barrier that housing presents to CS is the difficulty that Groups have in procuring housing that is affordable for the refugee family beyond the 2 year housing period.