

DECEMBER 2022



# THE FUTURE OF SPONSORSHIP

LEAD SPONSOR NETWORK  
ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Based on our learning across different forms of community-led welcome, Reset is advocating for a single future sponsorship scheme set out in our discussion paper. To develop our thinking and learn from the experience of key stakeholders, in December we brought together the Lead Sponsor Network to start to discuss some of the challenging questions in the design of a future scheme.

The Lead Sponsor Network is a group of charities and CICs that take on legal and support responsibilities for community groups welcoming refugees through the Community Sponsorship scheme. You can read more about the Lead Sponsor Network [here](#).

## QUESTIONS

(1) What role can Lead Sponsors play in a crisis response form of sponsorship?

(2) Should Lead Sponsors receive government funding? (What would you use this funding for?)

(3) What should Local Authority involvement be in a future single sponsorship scheme?

(4) What kind of training do sponsors need?

(5) Should naming only allow the welcome of those with Refugee Status Determination?

(6) How should a future single sponsorship scheme be managed?

## **(1) What role can Lead Sponsors play in a crisis response form of sponsorship?**

- Lead Sponsors should be front and centre of any future scheme. They can formulate the groups, help with fundraising, maintain positive relationships, and coordinate volunteers. They can also work with Local Authorities (LA's), and they've developed expertise from Community Sponsorship (CS) which should be utilised, as well as funded
- Even in a crisis, a scheme needs to be planned and involve Lead Sponsors in the design
- Depends on the size and capacity of the Lead Sponsor organisation. It is difficult to scale up in a crisis when organisations are small with part-time staff or solely volunteers
- High impact currently, with funding impact could be massive
- Only practical and sustainable if seriously funded with investment in current sponsorship. Funds could be used for raising awareness, recruiting volunteers, and strengthening networks. Support is needed so that in a crisis it is easier to scale up at speed
- Supporting sponsors through the process helps ensure a successful sponsorship experience
- Helpful to have other agencies (like Reset) doing matching and giving guidance so each organisation doesn't need to have all the skills/resources
- Lead Sponsors could be available for extra checks to ensure safety, home visits and face-to-face meetings before matching takes place/ monitoring and oversight of any potential issues
- Signposting to others (if no extra funding)
- Maintaining good relationships/partnerships with LAs to ensure the right support gets to the right places

**(2) Should Lead Sponsors receive government funding?  
(What would you use this funding for?)**

- Yes, and it must be guaranteed
- Housing (sourcing properties/creating schemes/top-up payments)
- For programme management, administration costs, DBS checks, monitoring; raising awareness, building capacity, working with groups to develop them and grow more groups
- Recruiting and managing volunteers (vital but needs funding to build capacity)
- Communications, advocacy, campaigns and promotion (possible collaborations here too)
- Indirect funding for a centralised translation service (language line)
- There could be pooled resources across sponsorship groups (sharing volunteer coordinators and campaigns officers for instance)
- We should be wary of taking funding away from LAs to fund Lead Sponsors ('robbing Peter to pay Paul'). If their capacity goes down it isn't helpful for sponsorship either

### **(3) What should Local Authority (LA) involvement be in a future single sponsorship scheme?**

- Really valuable to maintain a good relationship with Local Authorities. Can link Lead sponsors with support for benefits, housing, education or ESOL etc
- Local Authorities and Government should take key responsibilities (the burden should not lie solely with Lead Sponsors)
- Safeguarding role is important
- Concerns around LAs being able to block current community sponsorship groups. Future dynamics of power should be shifted towards an option to object if there are reasonable grounds for objection. Many rented houses lying empty because LAs haven't given consent
- There needs to be clarity on who gets a say on what (County Council vs District Council)
- Must have good lines of communication
- Many examples of positive experiences with LAs being supportive and giving advice but some bad experiences where there is no consent for sponsorship; no understanding of the scheme; no capacity
- Clear guidance on what support should be available with the funds LAs get for families
- Education and engagement work that could explain sponsorship to Local Authorities

**(4) What kind of training do sponsors need?**

- Yes to training and it should be mandatory. Sponsors, even if they are family or friends, need to understand their responsibilities
- Safeguarding from somewhere (which is what Lead Sponsors have training in for CS)
- Expectation management for sponsors and guests/newcomers
- Cultural awareness
- If 'naming' becomes a policy, training should still exist but should be redeveloped with experts by experience (Families Together Coalition)

## **(5) Should naming only allow the welcome of those with Refugee Status Determination?**

- Mixed feelings about whether sponsorship should be open to people without RSD
- UNHCR criteria are good, but they are unable to recognise everyone who is in need (even if they are eligible)
- Reports of people being 'struck off' the UNHCR list for resettlement if they don't respond to an offer immediately. Giving them no time to consider their decision
- Develop an assessment tool, agreed with refugee agencies and Government
- Families Together have detailed work in this area
- Needs alternative safeguarding in place
- Shouldn't become another migration route (must ensure it is humanitarian) as it could become politically problematic
- Look at Canada's model and the Italian system
- Cross-party support for parts of family reunion and to join up the systems and make them fair and efficient (not currently able to reunite with siblings or even parents if you are a child refugee)
- Naming could support the most vulnerable (who haven't been matched through resettlement) e.g. someone who needs lifesaving cancer treatment
- UNHCR has expertise in resettlement, they deal with the Government in terms of quotas, conduct assessments, and deal with submissions. If you think naming should come under resettlement, then it's a UNHCR mandate (otherwise a complementary pathway then other agencies could support)

**(6) How should a future single sponsorship scheme be managed?**

- Management by one Government department might ensure it is funded properly and there are clear lines of communication
- Concerns that departments would want to do things differently and prevent things from moving forward
- Developed with the involvement of key stakeholders (including lead sponsors and current groups)
- Home Office (some have concerns about the department but others suggest it's the only fit because they deal with immigration which is such a key aspect)
- DWP should be involved. Current unawareness of community sponsorship can cause issues and delays with the receipt of entitlements
- DLUHC, their welcoming and community focus may be beneficial
- Strategic Migration Partnerships (local management)