

Responding to the Refugee Crisis and Supporting Refugees in the UK

On 3rd September 2015 Archbishop Justin Welby said, *“The Church has always been a place of sanctuary for those in need, and Churches in the UK and across Europe have been meeting the need they are presented with. I reaffirm our commitment to the principle of sanctuary for those who require our help and love. The people of these islands have a long and wonderful history of offering shelter and refuge, going back centuries – whether it be Huguenot Christians, Jewish refugees, Ugandan Asians, Vietnamese boat people or many, many more. It has always been controversial at the time it happened, always been seen as too difficult. Yet each time we have risen to the challenge and our country has been blessed by the result.”*

This document has been produced by [Greater Together Manchester](#) in an attempt to give individuals, churches and other groups a starting point from which they can learn more about those issues they feel are relevant to them.

The UK Government has a page specifically dedicated to ways people can help refugees coming to the UK. [Click here](#) to find out more.

Churches Together in the Merseyside Region have published a practical guide for churches and other groups wanting to respond positively to the refugee crisis. You can read [A Guide: Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Migrants online here](#).

Get Informed

There is lots of information out there about the Refugee Crisis and the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

The Mission & Public Affairs Division at the Archbishop’s Council has published a Refugee Resettlement Factsheet – [download a copy here](#).

They have also produced a Guidance Note for people who want to know what they can do to support refugees now. [Click here](#) to download a copy of this document.

Archbishop Justin has said “As Christians we believe we are called to break down barriers, to welcome the stranger and love them as ourselves (Leviticus 19:34), and to seek the peace and justice of our God, in our world, today.” It is important therefore to educate oneself in the facts and arguments in order to be able to help break down those barriers, and respond to the concerns others may have in the community regarding migrants and refugees.

[The United Nations Refugee Agency](#) has amassed statistics and stories relating to the refugee crisis.

Housing a Refugee Family

Local authorities are in urgent need of more properties for the purpose of protecting and sheltering refugees. This doesn’t mean giving up the property for free – landlords will be eligible to receive local housing allowance rates. Leases need to be for a minimum of 14 months, but are ideally for longer so resettled refugees have more stability. [Find out more](#).

Offering a spare room

Thousands of people have offered up spare rooms to resettle vulnerable refugees fleeing violence. At present the two government run resettlement programmes cannot accept such offers and so in the short term they cannot be used to help Syrian refugees.

However, there are tens of thousands of destitute asylum seekers in Britain who are denied the right to work and often have no access to housing at all. They urgently need people to open their homes and are just as deserving of safety. You can connect with charities that help people with hosting via The No Accommodation Network, [NACCOM](#).

You may also be able to offer a spare room via [Refugees At Home](#).

Community Sponsorship

Full community sponsorship is a way that community groups can be involved in supporting the resettlement of vulnerable people fleeing conflict.

More information on Community Sponsorship has been compiled by Martin Kettle at the Mission & Public Affairs Division – you can [download his Factsheet here](#).

Guidance on Full Community Sponsorship is available from the [Home Office](#).

Campaign for change

A powerful network of local #RefugeesWelcome groups are popping up all across the UK.

In some towns and cities local groups have been working to protect people for years, in some we're just getting things started.

[Find or create local campaigning group](#).

Check out the [Regional Asylum Activism](#) website to see how you can get involved in campaigning for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

Donating clothes, household items etc.

Many people want to contribute but don't have much cash they can spare. Initiatives such as [CalAid](#) publish a list of the things they most urgently need.

Donating Monies

To donate to charities working in Syria:

[UN Refugee Agency](#)

[UNICEF](#)

[The British Red Cross](#)

[Christian Aid](#)

[Tearfund](#)

[Save the Children](#)

To help in tackling the crisis and drownings in the Mediterranean:

[Doctors Without Borders \(MSF\)](#)

[Migrant Offshore Aid Station \(MOAS\)](#)

[Worldwide Tribe](#)

To help charities looking after Refugees in the UK:

[Migrant Help](#)

[Boaz Trust](#)

Volunteer

Find an existing project in your locality and give your time and skills to help refugees and asylum seekers settle into the UK.

[Click here](#) to see what organisations are working in your area.

You can also search the [Mentoring and Befriending Network](#) to find a project near you.

The Manchester Refugee Support Network relies on volunteers in all aspects of its work. [Find out more about how you can volunteer with the MRSN.](#)

Foster a refugee child

Of the 20,000 people over the next five years, many are expected to be orphans and “unaccompanied minors” – young people in camps on their own. Nationally there is a chronic lack of trained foster carers who might support young refugees. Such a commitment is not to be taken lightly, nor is the long-term prospect of adoption.

Many of the young people who will be resettled may suffer serious trauma, even those without acute difficulties can only be placed with families with the utmost care. They may find it difficult to communicate and difficult to trust. It is vitally important that these children and young people are placed in safe homes where they can have the time, space and support to begin to rebuild their lives.

Those who think they have what it takes to support a young person who’s sought sanctuary should read through the materials provided by specialist organisations who can help them get trained and registered.

[Home for Good](#) works with local authorities across the UK and are compiling a database of people who have space in their homes and are interested in fostering unaccompanied asylum-seeking children for a few days, short term or long term. [Find out more.](#)

Reflect & Pray

The Mission Theology Advisory Group at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have published a Theological Reflection on mission, migrants and refugees. [You can download a copy here.](#)

A Prayer for the Refugee Crisis

*Heavenly Father,
you are the source of all goodness, generosity and love.
We thank you for opening the hearts of many
to those who are fleeing for their lives.
Help us now to open our arms in welcome,
and reach out our hands in support.
That the desperate may find new hope,
and lives torn apart be restored.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord,
who fled persecution at His birth
and at His last triumphed over death.
Amen*