

Defining Boundaries and your Support

It may seem a little strange to set boundaries on the way in which you work with refugees, after all, you got into Community Sponsorship in order to provide practical support to those arriving in the UK. However, spending time defining the way in which your Group will operate and what a refugee family can expect from your group will be hugely helpful; for your Group as well as the refugees.

Every Community Sponsorship Group is different, as is your neighbourhood and the support that you will offer refugees so there is no standard way in which you should do this. This guidance is designed to help you facilitate introducing your boundaries to your volunteers and those you are supporting.

Support or Service?

Some Groups have told us that they find it useful to think of what your Group provide for refugees as a service – it has clearly defined parameters which tie into the [approach to empowerment](#) you are taking. Others find that thinking in terms of support is helpful – you are there to enable the refugees to start their lives in the UK. However you choose to think about this, what is crucial is the consistent manner in which your Group members offer this.

Don't forget to ensure that the refugees are aware of who you are and how your Group is managed. Whilst Community Sponsorship will have been explained during the allocations process, it's worth reminding the refugees on arrival of this. They may think that your Group is more closely associated with the Home Office, your Local Authority or Resettlement Charities. As all are involved in resettlement in the UK, it can be confusing. Explain that you are carrying out your work in a voluntary capacity and explain how you are working with others.

Consistency

Having a clearly defined approach and outline for how you will work with refugees will only succeed if everyone is doing the same thing and taking the same approach. This is going to help refugees to understand your role and how they can work with you as well as assist you in the management of your Group.

Imagine how overwhelming things must be for the refugees that you are supporting – they may have been waiting for a resettlement opportunity for many years, facing situations we can only hope that never happen in our own communities and trying to keep their family safe. You arrive in a country where (we assume) you don't share the same language, and you begin to navigate things like the benefits system as well as everything that is involved in starting a life again – perhaps for the 3rd or 4th time. Knowing exactly how you can expect help will be a comfort to you.

Having a consistent approach can avoid confusion, disappointment and will empower refugees to make their own choices and enable them to feel ownership of their own lives. It is also going to assist you greatly in working together as a group.

Groups have shared with us that it has been useful to have someone in your group who is not as involved on a day to day basis with the family you are supporting; they can be helpful in ensuring that you are delivering what you set out to do and to step in if feels like something is going awry.

Communication

It's important to be clear about the boundaries you establish between your Group members and the refugees you support. You'll communicate in different ways, perhaps it's through a code of conduct or agreement for Group members, discussions in person or through an agreement or the [Welcome Pack](#) you'll prepare for the refugee family. It's likely you'll need a variety of methods to communicate your boundaries; but repetition and reminders are key! We all forget ourselves sometimes and start doing too much or too little.

Your Boundaries

You'll be the best placed people to decide what boundaries you will base you support around, but we've provided some boundaries you may wish to ask yourselves below. This is by no means exhaustive.

Remember that your boundaries may change over time, for example, a member of your group may develop a friendship with the refugees you are supporting. Ask yourselves whether boundaries become blurred and do all you can to ensure there is not an over-reliance on one member of your group.

Boundary	Things to consider
Set timings for refugees to contact Group members in non-emergency situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does this encourage independence of refugees? ● How can this reduce dependence on Group members? ● Will it allow Group members to manage their time commitment for offering support?
Accepting hospitality when visiting refugees at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does it feel rude to not accept food and drink when visiting someone at home? ● Does accepting hospitality get in the way of what you are hoping to achieve (ie: are you trying to get out for an appointment?)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does providing you with food/drinks mean that the family might be going without? (their budget will be limited whilst they are claiming benefits) ● How will those in the group who may have food allergies or intolerances be able to manage this?
Lone working of group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will your volunteers visit the family on their own? How will you ensure they feel comfortable to do so if the answer to this is yes? (find out more about how to manage your group safely) ● Will the family you are supporting feel comfortable receiving this support from one person initially? ● Will this change over time as you and the refugees get to know each other better?
Accepting gifts from a refugee family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does this set the right tone for how you see your support to the family? ● Will the family be going without to give you a gift?
Individual groups giving money/items/gifts to the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will this blur the support you're offering? Will this make the refugees feel differently about your support? ● Will this affect how the family are learning to budget? Will it encourage dependence on your group? ● Is this fair on all members of your Group?
Loaning money to a refugee family for a specific reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How will your Group establish an process for loaning money to the family? ● What terms will you put on a loan (the length of time the family will have to pay it back, interest)? ● How will you ensure the family know that this is a loan and must be paid back?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will your Group decide in what situations it is and is not ok to loan money to the family?
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There are many areas to think about, we encourage you to work through these as a group and get agreement for what you can provide. Ensure everyone is aware of the agreement you've made and that they feel that they can stick to them.

There may be a situation that requires you to remove one of the boundaries you've placed on the support offered. We suggest that this is not done lightly, and instead you focus on the reasons for why this boundary was removed, whether it is still relevant, and what you will do to ensure that everyone knows that this is a 'one-off'.

Explaining your boundaries to refugees

It's good to outline key boundaries you have decided on to the family you are supporting as early as possible, the Welcome Pack you create could be a useful place to do so. For example, if you are including a document with photographs and names of your group members, say on here what time they can be contacted and how. Should a boundary be overstepped, or not clarified, make sure you regularly review these with the family. Make sure the family know why boundaries are in place and that they are clear that your role is to support them to independence, but you can only support their efforts, you can't magically solve every challenge or do everything for a refugee. Be clear on how they can ask for help if required.

Explaining your boundaries to your group

Some groups have established a code of conduct, outlining their boundaries and approach to empowerment which they share with everyone associated with their group; it's a helpful way to make expectations clear. Remind group members of your approach regularly and provide opportunities to feed back on how these are going, it's not easy to stick to boundaries in some circumstances – share these challenges between you all.

Boundaries of Refugees

Just like your Group, the family you are supporting may decide that they have boundaries too. Perhaps they don't want you to visit them at home every day, they may not want you to be involved with medical appointment and help or they simply may wish to work out local transport for themselves. Make sure you listen to their wishes, and explain the things that you are responsible for making happen (e.g. you have to facilitate the review meetings from the Home Office) and outline how your support can help, but keep in mind that this is a two way relationship that you are creating, and this will change over time.