

Choosing your Community Sponsorship Lead Sponsor

In order to apply to welcome a family through Community Sponsorship, the Home Office require that you partner with a Lead Sponsor Organisation.

A Lead Sponsor is a registered charity that agrees to take legal responsibility for your group. Any charity can act as a Lead Sponsor - but we recommend that you choose an experienced Lead Sponsor, as they will be able to provide you with plenty of support and resources throughout the process.

Sponsor Refugees (Citizens UK)

Sponsor Refugees are the Lead Sponsor to more than 40 Community Sponsorship groups across the UK, through our parent charity, Citizens UK. We are currently the only non-religious Principal Lead Sponsor who can support groups in any region of the UK. Here is what some of our groups say about working with us:



"The Community Sponsorship journey is an exciting but arduous journey with the wondrous prize of welcoming a family (which we did in February 2021!). Without the support and encouragement at every stage of Sponsor Refugees, as our Lead Sponsor, Croeso Menai would not have succeeded. Because SR is part of Citizens UK, its staff have a broader outlook on the benefits of community sponsorship and how it fits into the wider goal of community engagement. In this way, we volunteers benefit from expert mentoring and guidance to grow as valued members of our community, with the result that not only is a refugee family supported to resettle but a community is helped to grow its social cohesion and neighbourly awareness. We are all richer as a result of embarking on community sponsorship under the expert guidance of Sponsor Refugees."

Catherine Griffiths, Croeso Menai

"Sponsor Refugees have been an integral part of Resettle@Guildford. We would not have had the confidence to take the process forward without their input and support. They have partnered us up with other community sponsorship groups when we have had key questions, they have willingly joined our meetings at any time of the day and talked through questions and processes. Every step of the way, we have felt supported, encouraged and welcomed. Their lunch and learns are a brilliant way to meet other groups and draw on their experiences. Now that they are our lead sponsor we have a renewed confidence that our application will be successful and that we have support from a dedicated team that not only know what they are doing, but they do it so efficiently and positively." Anna Wright, Resettle@Guildford





"Sponsor Refugees have been unfailingly helpful in supporting our application. They are always on hand to answer questions on the process from any member of our team, no matter how large or small a query it is, and they are ceaselessly patient, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and compassionate in their work. We couldn't ask for a better Lead Sponsor." Roshan Lal, Steel City Welcome

"Sponsor Refugees has been a great Lead Sponsor for our group, always available to provide useful information and to answer all our questions. To community sponsorship groups, Sponsor Refugees offers not only its expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm, but also the possibility to be connected with a wide community of people who care about refugees." Gabriela D'Avino, Peckham Sponsors Refugees



What does a Lead Sponsor do?

Choosing your Lead Sponsor will be one of the most important decisions you will make as a group. They are taking legal responsibility for your group and its actions. In the very unlikely and unfortunate event that your group breaks down, the Lead Sponsor will need to mediate, and potentially step in to support the refugee family.

The charity will need to assign a person in a significant leadership position (e.g. a Rabbi, a Senior Manager) to oversee and sign off on your application. This person will include their personal details on the Application Form, and the Home Office communications will be sent through to them.

The Lead Sponsor signs a legal agreement with the Home Office, agreeing to take responsibility for the family, provide insurance, oversee the governance of your group and ensure that all volunteers are suitable and safely vetted.

As you can see, it's a big responsibility – so it is best to work with an experienced charity. They will be well set up to assume this responsibility – and will already have the frameworks in place to support your group.

What is our approach to Lead Sponsorship?

We want to welcome as many families as possible to the UK through the Community Sponsorship scheme. We believe the scheme strengthens civil society and is transformative both for host communities and for resettled families. Being Lead Sponsor is one of the best ways we can support communities to participate – by assuming the risk and taking the hassle out of the application process.

We do have some safeguarding procedures that we ask all groups to follow, but otherwise, we encourage you to approach Community Sponsorship "your way", and we embrace the creativity and innovation that each community brings to this project.

What do Sponsor Refugees provide as Lead Sponsor?

- Leading expertise in Community Sponsorship and a dedicated team member to provide bespoke support
- 30 years institutional knowledge in Community Organising, and access to a team of local Community Organisers and Chapters across England & Wales ([see locations here](#))
- Matched with a Group Mentor – someone who has already welcomed a family through Community Sponsorship
- Application Resource Pack - with a template project management plans, policies, example application forms, tenancy agreements, volunteer handbooks, etc.
- Ability to apply through the PSAP (Principal Sponsors Application Process) - a new fast-track application process for experienced Lead Sponsors
- Offer of bespoke workshops to build a strong, resilient, and knowledgeable team
- Your own fundraising pages (with ability to receive regular and text donations and claim gift aid)
- Safeguarding Framework – Volunteer Registration, DBS checks, Support & training, Public Liability Insurance. [Cost of 5 DBS checks included]
- Mediation should you have conflicts within the group, or between group and family members
- Landlord Registry: we receive offers of houses to rent from landlords across the country, and we can share any suitable offers with you.

What do we expect of our Lead Sponsor groups?

- Lead Sponsorship Dues. From January 2021: £1,500 per application (£1,000 for groups in membership of Citizens UK).
- Sign a Memorandum of Understanding
- Follow our Safeguarding Procedures
- Be a proud advocate of Community Sponsorship
- Approach Community Sponsorship with equality and respect towards the resettled family. “Nothing about the family without the family”.

Why do we ask for Lead Sponsor dues?

On average, it costs Citizens UK £3,750 for each group that we support as Lead Sponsor. To ensure that we have sustainable funding income, we ask groups to contribute towards these charitable costs, so that we can continue to support you, and promote the scheme.

Your dues will cover for the full sponsorship journey - from planning your application, all through the 24 months of support you provide to the family. We can work to create a flexible payment plan that works for your group.

If we are your Lead Sponsor, you can fundraise through Citizens UK, enabling you to claim 25p for every £1 donated by a UK taxpayer. If you raise your £9,000 target this provides an additional £2,250.

Are there other experienced Lead Sponsors we could approach?

There are alternatives to Citizens UK acting as an experienced Lead Sponsor, depending on where your group is in the country and factors such as faith identity. Here is a list of other potential Lead Sponsors you could approach:

Caritas (Catholic groups)

Mercy Mission

Catholic Care (Yorkshire)

Nugent (Liverpool)

Charis (South West England)

Salvation Army

Church Of England

The Pickwell Foundation (North Devon)

For Refugees

Reset can offer objective advice about each Lead Sponsor, and help you to consider which organisation would be the best fit. Contact enquiries@resetuk.org.

Could any local charity or CIC act as Lead Sponsor?

Any registered charity can act as Lead Sponsor, so you could approach a local charity, perhaps a refugee charity, village society, or a faith institution, and ask them if they would be your 'Lead Sponsor'. In fact, you may already be a registered charity.

The disadvantage of this path is that the organisation will probably not be familiar with Community Sponsorship from the start. This would likely add a lot of time to your planning, as you gain consent from a Board of Trustees, the Lead Sponsor learns their new role, and to develop relevant policies and support frameworks.

That said, many successful community sponsorships have happened this way. The charity Reset can offer lots of advice and guidance, and run a Lead Sponsors Network where you can learn from other sponsors.

Could we register as a charity?

Yes, you could decide to register as a charity or CIC, rather than partnering with an existing charity. However, this can be quite a long-winded process and places additional legal responsibilities on your group, so we recommend that you only go down this route if your group definitely aspires to support multiple families over a number of years. You can find some initial guidance on this route [here](#).