**<Group Name>**

 Strategy to procure a home for resettled family

The following key criteria for a suitable house and tenancy have been identified

* 3 bedrooms with room sizes capable of occupation by up to five persons (two parents plus two or three children)
* Location within xx (not outlying villages or neighbouring town of xx which falls within same local authority area)
* Position affording good accessibility to local public transport (bus routes, recognising the family will not have access at least initially to private transport)
* Situation within 1 km xx Primary School and 5-7 km of xx Secondary School (considered important in securing school places given xx
* A level of rent that is close to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) of xx. For a family for whom a three bedroom property is considered suitable then for the current financial year which ends on xx the monthly LHA is xx(benefit payments towards cost of housing are set at the lower of the LHA or the actual rent).
* Two year fixed term Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement on either a furnished or unfurnished basis

There are three key areas where efforts to secure a home in xx to meet the above criteria will be focused

1. Housing Associations: - Continue exploring possibilities with Housing Associations who hold stock within xx. A number have already been contacted and whilst to date this avenue has not proved fruitful there are still some leads which are being followed up on and may yield a positive result.
2. Philanthropic/Friendly Private Landlord: - Make an appeal to both registered supporters of the project (those who have signed up to offer help and have agreed to be kept informed about the project by email) and the wider community in xx asking if anyone already owns a house, or even might be prepared to purchase one to hold as an investment, that they would be prepared to rent on favourable terms to a resettled family.
3. Rent on the open market: - Following initial online research through websites such as Rightmove which specialise in the residential property letting market, identify letting agents offering suitable houses (based on the above key criteria) and/or are particularly active in the target areas of xx. Using this list of agents, we will establish the appropriate senior person dealing with lettings in each firm/company and make a targeted approach to them. This will be through an introductory email with attached document outlining the nature of the project and specifying the key criteria. The aim is to establish whether any of their landlord clients would a) be willing to rent to a resettled family on the required basis i.e. two year agreement etc. and b) own any suitable houses that either are currently available or might/will become available (through termination of an existing tenancy) within the next few months. If a response is not forthcoming to this initial approach there will be a follow up letter and/or phone call. All initial positive leads will be pursued and if unproductive regular contact will be maintained with agents who engage with us. In addition, appropriate websites will be monitored for any potentially suitable houses which come to the market after the initial search.

Housing Sub-group

From within the membership of the group, a sub-group to focus on the issue of housing has been established. This group, with ad-hoc support where/when required will be responsible for considering all potentially suitable properties that arise from any/all the above three possible routes, including following a desktop filtering process measuring all properties against the above key criteria visiting/viewing properties.

A final decision on moving forward on any property in terms of agreeing terms, subject to contract, will be made through the full steering group specifically with the participation of the lead sponsor, xx and it is acknowledged by subject to approval by relevant authorities including input from the police on the suitability of the property’s situation/location in particular.

Empowerment of the family re: accommodation

Throughout the period of the sponsorship agreement, the Housing Team will work to support the family to understand their tenancy agreement, options available to them in ongoing housing needs after the initial 2 years, and how to liaise with their landlords for any of their housing needs. We will work with the family to ascertain their ambitions around housing, and help them to plan out how they may be able to achieve these goals in order that they have ongoing sustainable and affordable accommodation beyond year 2. Should the family wish to move out of the area after the 24 months, we will work with them to help them understand what this means, what actions would need to be taken should they wish to do so, and the timeline for this.

Ongoing Accommodation

Community Sponsorship requires a Group to find accommodation at a sustainable rate for a refugee family for 24 months. There is no commitment beyond this but we are aware that this is a major concern for families and those who support them. We anticipate working with the family members over the year of integration support to ready them for finding employment, which will remove any benefit cap applied to the family. We’ll ensure that time is put aside to talk regularly to the family about where they wish to live and any opportunity to stay on in the accommodation that we have sourced for them. They will be fully aware of any stipulations on their tenancy and requirements on them to gain employment. If the family we are allocated are unable to work, support will be provided to access potential additional funds or benefits to support their housing.

If they family are unable to afford, do not wish to stay in the property or it is unavailable after the 2 years, we will work with them to create a plan of how they will move on. This could include:

* Should they wish to move out of the area, we would help to prepare them develop the skills to register for services in the new area
* Helping them to research properties and reach out to landlords
* Developing skills to move property
* Accessing Refugee Integration Loans (if available) and funding to enable them to move into another property
* We will manage the expectation of any family members around moving to social or local authority housing
* We anticipate creating a plan of when we will discuss ongoing accommodation with the family we support once we know who they are, building their independence.

At this stage, we cannot say who the family will be or how they will be constituted. We know that the decision on accepting a family will be a joint decision between our Group and the Local Authorities and we will look to the Local Authorities for guidance on acceptance based on their experience.

