



Refugee Resettlement Frequently Asked Questions

The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) was established in 2001 and is funded by the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to facilitate strategic leadership, advice and coordination on migration. The WSMP is hosted by the [Welsh Local Government Association](#) (WLGA) to reflect the Partnership's All-Wales role around migration.

The Refugee Resettlement Coordinator at the [WSMP](#) leads on the Wales-wide coordination of the UK Government resettlement schemes and Community Sponsorship, acting as a single point of contact for the Home Office, 22 Welsh councils, voluntary and community sector and other partners.

Who is a refugee?
What is the 1951 Refugee Convention?
How many refugees are there in the UK?
What are the UK Resettlement Schemes?
What is the Community Sponsorship Scheme?
How do people get selected for resettlement?
What is the role of the International Organisation for Migration?
What is the role of councils?
What are your contact details for further information?

Who is a refugee?

The definition of a refugee according to the [United Nations Refugee Convention](#) is: "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

In the UK, a person becomes a refugee if the government agrees that an individual who has applied for asylum meets the definition in the **Refugee Convention** at which point they will 'recognise' that person as a refugee and issue them with refugee status documentation.

What is the 1951 Refugee Convention?

The Refugee Convention was set up in the wake of the Second World War, when large numbers of people sought refuge in other countries. It is a United Nations



multilateral treaty that defines who a refugee is, sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. The UK is a party to the 1951 Convention.

How many refugees are there in the UK?

Wales has long provided refuge to those seeking sanctuary, with supporting Irish immigrant population which fled the Great Famine in the 1840s, through welcoming over 4,500 Belgian refugees during the First World War to hosting the largest Italian community in the UK, the majority of which immigrated between 19th and 20th century.

In recent years more formal routes to resettlement have been established through the introduction of the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) as well as the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which have seen over 750 refugees settle in Wales.

According to the [UN, there are around 133,000 refugees in the UK](#). The majority will have applied for asylum in this country before they are recognised as refugees.

What are the UK Resettlement Schemes?

In June 2019, the UK Government announced that a new consolidated [UK Resettlement Scheme \(UKRS\)](#) would replace VPRS and other existing resettlement programmes from April 2020. The new scheme would aim to resettle around 5,000 refugees each year. The roll out of UKRS was delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Since 1st March 2025 [The Afghan Resettlement Programme \(ARP\)](#) brings together existing Afghan resettlement schemes into a single pipeline, designed to improve efficiency, value for money and outcomes across Afghan Resettlement.

Existing schemes that will be brought under the ARP include:

1. [The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\)](#). This is for Afghan citizens who worked for or with the UK Government in Afghanistan in exposed or meaningful roles and may include an offer of relocation to the UK for those deemed eligible by the Ministry of Defence and who are deemed suitable for relocation by the Home Office.
2. [The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\)](#). This is a referral-based resettlement scheme which prioritises vulnerable people and those who assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan.

For further information please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-resettlement-programme>



What is the Community Sponsorship Scheme?

[Community Sponsorship](#) is part of UK Government-UNHCR resettlement programme which allows community groups to directly welcome and support a resettled family into their local community. It is designed to operate in partnership with local communities and promotes positive outcomes for both resettled families and those who support them.

Refugees resettled through the Community Sponsorship are in addition to those resettled to councils through other resettlement schemes.

[RESET charity](#) provides advice, support and assistance with practical requirements for groups wanting to register and become sponsors.

Communities for Afghans

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government “the Department”, is seeking to run a competition and enter grant funding arrangements to establish partner VCSE, “Principal Sponsors”, to work with them to lead community sponsorship organisations to deliver a second phase of the “Communities for Afghans project” (deadline April 10th 2025).

Communities for Afghans is a sponsorship route for individuals from the Afghan Resettlement Programme. It is designed to quickly deliver safe, affordable homes, based on a community sponsorship model, enabling local community groups to welcome and support refugees directly in their local communities. As such, it operates differently from other resettlement programmes. Responsibility for the resettlement of households is shared between HM Government, Principal Sponsors, Sponsor Groups and councils. Successful sponsorship arrangements will therefore rely on positive engagement and collaborative working relationships between these groups.

The Communities for Afghans (CfA) phase 2 aims to accommodate 500 Afghan households (approximately 2,750 individuals) on the Afghan Resettlement Programme by the end of March 2031. The aim is to provide households with the tools that they need to integrate into society and promote cohesion between guests and their local communities so that they can participate fully in UK life.

For further information please visit

[Communities for Afghans project: MHCLG policy update - GOV.UK](#)

How do people get selected for resettlement?



The [UN Refugee Agency \(UNHCR\)](#) identifies people who are most at risk of **serious harm** in the country where they are registered, and also in their home country, usually because of **threats to their life, freedom or physical safety, or other serious violations of human rights**. These risks are assessed when responding to the specific needs of individuals and families, taking due account of the local context, the availability of legal and physical protection, the accessibility of relevant services, the prospects for returning safely to their home country and the principle of family unity.

Women, men, girls and boys may be considered for resettlement, as well as persons of diverse gender identity or sexual orientation, people living with a disability, stateless individuals and others who are assessed to be in need of international protection. Factors such as nationality, ethnicity, political opinion, religious beliefs, education, work experience and language are not relevant to whether UNHCR will consider people for resettlement.

Resettlement is not a right. The UNHCR will prioritize **the most urgent cases for referral to a resettlement country**. Refugees cannot choose the country which UNHCR will ask to consider their case, although they have the right to decide whether or not they wish to be resettled.

What is the role of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)?

The IOM provides resettlement support which broadly falls under five areas:

1. Facilitating selection missions and visa processing

The IOM can provide logistical support to the resettlement states' authorities, facilitating their selection missions as well as the visa processing and travel document procedures in the countries from where refugees are resettled.

2. Providing pre-departure health assessment

The IOM's pre-departure health assessment as well as health assistance during travel is to ensure that refugees' health needs are addressed prior to departure, that they are fit to travel, and that appropriate arrangements can be made for reception and continuity of care when needed.

3. Carrying out pre-departure orientation sessions

Pre-departure orientation sessions are paramount to address integration aspects at the earliest possible stage of a refugee's resettlement journey. They aim to help refugees develop practical skills and attitudes that contribute to their early integration in the receiving country.

4. Providing post-arrival integration support

The IOM can also provide post-arrival integration support to resettled refugees. Their aim is to facilitate early integration, examples include post-arrival orientation sessions, the provision of direct support, or the facilitation of enhanced engagement with the receiving community.



5. Implementing movement management and travel operations

To assist refugees in need of resettlement, the IOM provides comprehensive movement assistance that includes in-country and international transportation. While most refugees travel by scheduled commercial air service, certain operations need tailor made arrangements and the use of charter flights.

What is the role of councils?

Every council across Wales has resettled refugee families to date. Council participation is essential to the resettlement of families.

The first aspect is for the council to secure a property to offer to the resettlement scheme. They must furnish the property accordingly and ensure food and equipment is provided for the family arriving. The matching process, managed by the WSMP Refugee Resettlement Coordinator, ensures formal acceptances of families for the property, including liaison with police, health, and education colleagues.

Upon arrival the council or the support organisation commissioned by the council, must provide an orientation of the property and appliances, and obtain a signed tenancy agreement by the family.

The following day the family will begin their integration support. This support includes registration with GP services, school admissions, registration with dentists,

assistance in setting up utilities and attending an appointment with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Bank accounts will also be set-up and orientation of the area will be provided.

Financial support is provided by UK Government for family support for a 3-year period for [ARAP and ACRS](#), and 5 years for [UKRS](#) to councils.

What are your contact details for further information?

Please email WSMPComms@wlga.gov.uk and adding 'refugee resettlement query' in the subject line.