

'It takes a community to resettle a family'



# HOME *from* HOME



A Community Sponsorship of Refugees



‘I remember driving home, smiling to myself about the laughter we had just had. It had not even dawned on us that we didn’t speak the same language.’

Emily Coles, sponsorship team member



LEFT: the family arrive at the airport

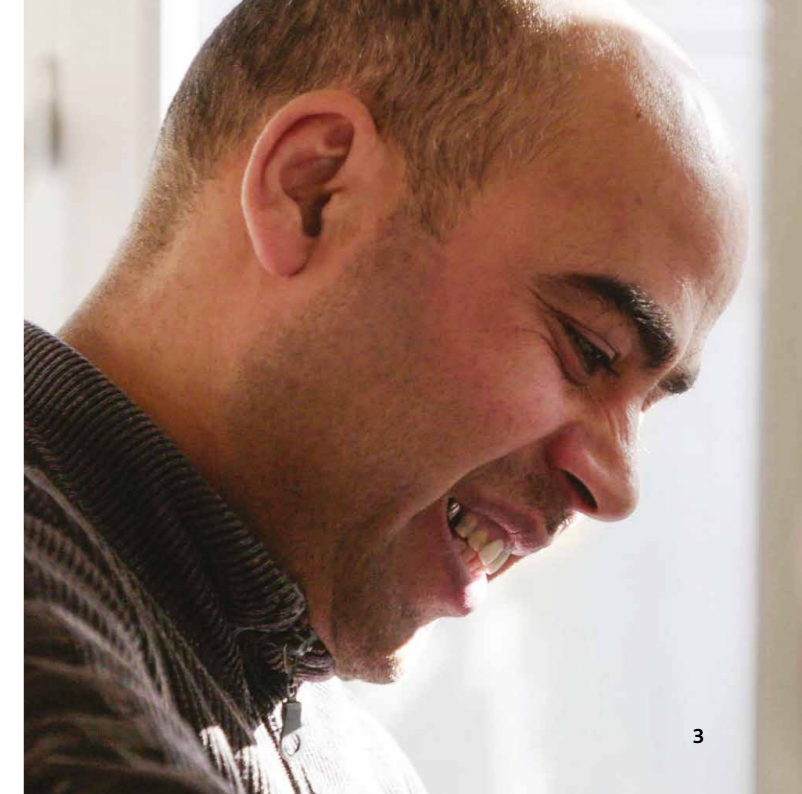
RIGHT: Kerry Coke and Manal

## Introduction

**IN FEBRUARY 2017** a Syrian refugee family arrived at Gatwick airport from Lebanon. The excited group of people waiting in the arrivals area were from a community in South West London that had been preparing for months to welcome them. It was a pivotal moment for everyone as their lives were now bound together in an extraordinary way. This booklet is a brief snapshot of the people involved.

For centuries, the UK has offered refuge to those seeking sanctuary. In 2015, in response to the Syrian conflict, the Prime Minister announced that 20,000 people would come to Britain as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. As families began to arrive and rebuild their lives, more and more communities made it clear they wanted to step up and play their part in the welcome and resettlement process. Consequently, The Home Office and civil society organisations came together to co-design The Community Sponsorship of Refugees scheme. Launched in June 2016, this particular form of resettlement gave ordinary people from ordinary communities the opportunity to form sponsorship groups that would directly support refugees.

Today, Community Sponsorship is a growing movement, with sponsoring groups emerging in villages, towns and cities across the UK.





*'In London we found a new family waiting for us.'*

Ghassan (father)



## The family

THE ALNABULSI FAMILY were forced to flee from their home, due to conflict in Syria, in 2011. They crossed the border into Lebanon as refugees and worked hard to make ends meet. Life was extremely challenging, particularly due to the lack of appropriate housing, scarcity of work and the life-threatening health needs of one of the children. They applied to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to be considered for resettlement. Because of their heightened vulnerability they were offered the opportunity to come to the UK under the Home Office's Community Sponsorship scheme.



*'I love going to school. I have so many friends, and I love maths.'*

Rayan (child)



RIGHT: The family meet Ahmed Hussen, The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Canada



Photos of the family



*'Praise to God, my daughter is getting medical help.'*

Manal (mother)





*'It takes a community to resettle a family. So many people have been involved and they keep thanking us for giving them an opportunity to help.'*

Valerie Sawyer, Treasurer, Retired

## The sponsorship team

THE COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP GROUP was formed through Raynes Park Community Church, a Salvation Army congregation in the London Borough of Merton. Whilst not experts in refugee resettlement, many members of the Community Sponsorship group were well-rooted in their community and had a history of supporting people. They had connections with an array of local people, right across the generations, with a variety of the gifts and skills needed to welcome and support a family moving to the area. Slowly but surely they built a team of volunteers from within the church and the wider community to fulfil the key support areas of housing, English language tuition, education, benefits and work, health and well-being.



Members from the sponsorship group with the family



*'It takes a family to make a community. We've made many new friends locally and have grown closer together because the family came here.'*

Major Nick Coke, Sponsorship Co-ordinator, Church leader



*'When we saw the terrible images of what was happening in Syria we felt compelled to do something and put our prayers into action.'*

Steve Coles, Chair of Leadership Team, Charity CEO



*'The house was unfurnished so I drew up a list of everything we needed – from a washing machine to cutlery to beds and toys. Within a month every item on the list had been donated!'*

Major Kerry Coke, Assistant Sponsorship Co-ordinator, Church leader

## Preparing the house

SPONSORSHIP GROUPS find suitable housing that a family can live in for two years.



*'One Sunday we cancelled our church service and 50 of us spent the day getting the house ready. By the time we finished, the house was fully furnished and cleaned from top to bottom.'*

Andrew Grinsted, Housing Support, Property Maintenance Services



*'The Government is delighted with the progress the Community Sponsorship scheme has made, which is in no small part thanks to the inspiring work of the volunteers, particularly from faith groups, who have welcomed refugees into their communities.'*

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP, the Immigration Minister and responsible for the Community Sponsorship scheme

## Home Office

COMMUNITY SPONSORS work closely with The Home Office in preparing their application and ensuring that they are ready to sponsor.



The family meet the Home Secretary on the first anniversary of the introduction of Community Sponsorship

**'In July 2017 we announced a new £1m capacity building fund to help communities in their efforts to welcome and support refugees through the scheme. We hope many more groups will be inspired to get involved and support families and individuals who want to rebuild their lives in the UK.'**

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP





## Local Authority

COMMUNITY SPONSORS are required to get permission from their local authority.

Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families, London borough of Merton



*'We have supported The Salvation Army's application to government every step of the way. I have been really impressed by its commitment and willingness to anticipate the family's needs.'*

**'We have found that resettlement of refugees through community sponsorship is a rewarding collaboration, with civil society and councils building partnerships and trust through the process.'**



## Support team



*'I've done various DIY jobs throughout the year. Putting furniture together, fixing curtain rails, getting keys cut – things like that.'*

Dave Morgan,  
Housing Support, Retired

**'The group laugh at me for knowing every bus route in our area – but it's important for someone to show the family how to get around! I've also knitted cardigans for the children, and their extended family members elsewhere.'**

Joan Morgan,  
Well-being, Retired

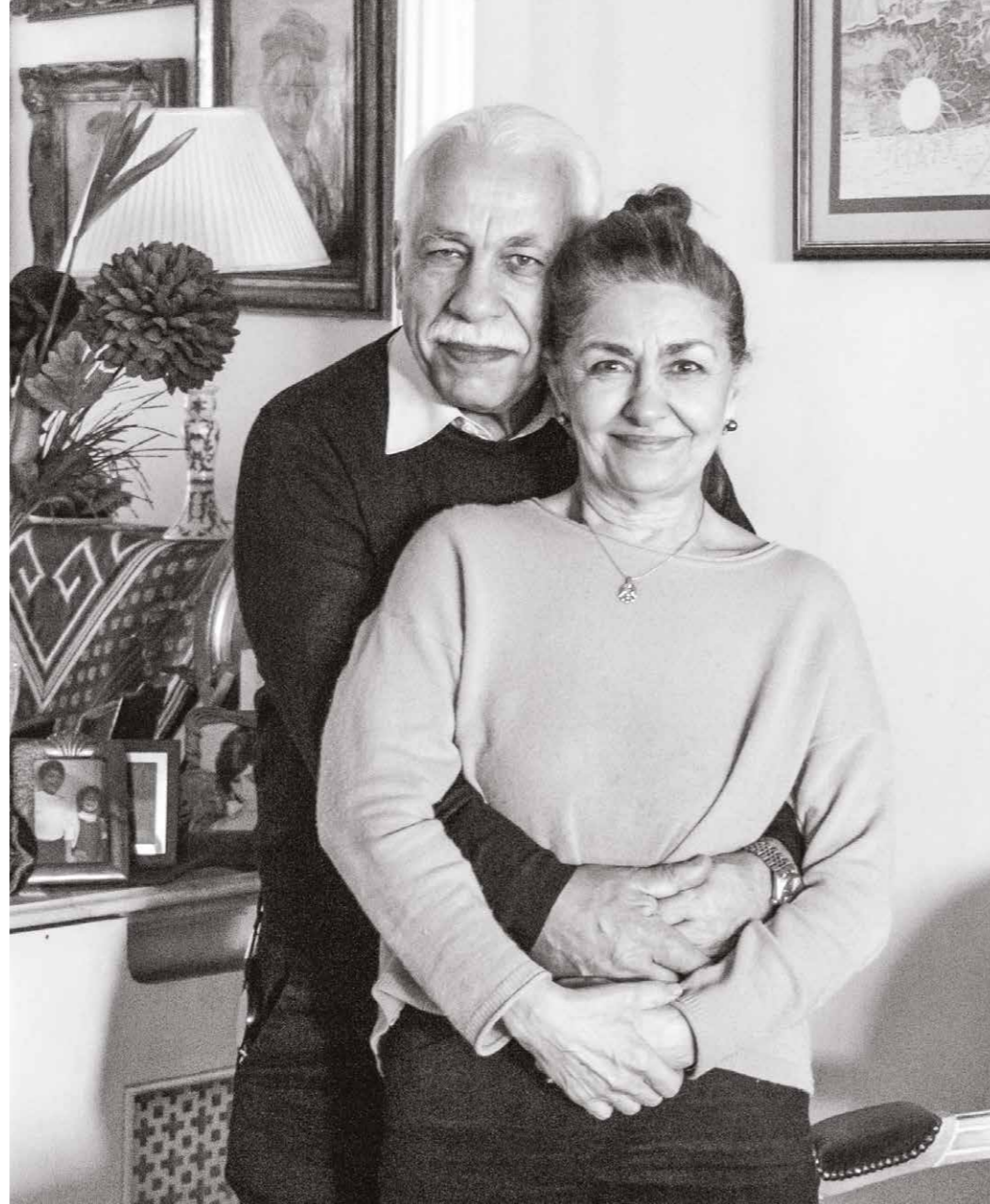


*'It's very rewarding to see how the family are settling in and making a home here. I'm so glad that I have been able to use my language skills in this way.'*

Wafa Al-Samarrai,  
Interpreter, Retired

## Interpreters

INTERPRETERS play an important role in the team, particularly in the early days after a family arrives.



**'My heart bleeds for the people of Syria. I think anybody would be happy to help. I am retired and have some spare time – what better than helping others?!'**

Dr Mohammed Al-Samarrai, Interpreter, Retired:



ESOL teacher, Juliana Wong, with Ghassan and Manal



*'Manal is making great progress. She will text me in almost perfect English between classes if there is anything I need to know. I am very impressed with how hard they both work.'*

Juliana Wong, ESOL teacher,  
Merton Home Tutoring

mhts.org.uk

## English language

NEWLY RESETTLED FAMILIES are required to do at least 8 hours a week of English language classes, organised by the Sponsorship group.



*'Seeing a family torn away from those they love, I have learned to value my own family and friendships in a deeper way.'*



## Support Team

In Syria Manal and Ghassan both had large extended families and a strong culture of community. In the UK new friendships have formed through Community Sponsorship.

Wendy Wall, Well-being,  
Speech and language therapist



**'I've learnt that friendship and love can overcome the cultural and language barriers that can seem to separate us. To start with I helped the family with very practical tasks but now they are part of our lives as friends and part of the community.'**

Tom Underwood, Well-being, Special Educational Needs teacher:

## Employer

Ghassan got his first job 4 months after arriving into the UK.

*'We as a church have a heart for working with refugees and so the timing was perfect to be able to offer Ghassan the opportunity to work for us. It's been totally amazing to see him become part of our community. He's an incredibly hard worker, and we have loved seeing his sense of humour, while also being humbled by the devastating tales of life in Syria.'*

Major Gordon Cotterill, Major Catherine Cotterill, Mrs Tatiane Delcampo, Employers, Sutton Salvation Army.





# Children and young people

Re-settling a family involves people of all ages.

*'I really enjoy going to the park and playing with Rayan, Bisan and Mohammed. They have changed my life!'*

Joshua Coles, Befriender, School boy



Rebekah Grinsted, Befriender Student

**'My role has been to help the family feel welcome. I got an Arabic-speaking friend from school to help me make a huge welcome poster for when they arrived. As time has gone on I've played a big sister role to the children.'**



*'When the girls started school a week after they arrived, they were up, fully dressed in their uniforms at 4.30am! They hadn't been to school in 6 years. They are thriving in their education and the school have been incredibly supportive.'*

Claire Hayles, Schools Support, Teacher



## Support Team



**'I've enjoyed dropping round to the house to give homework support. I always receive a wonderful welcome. We've even been swimming together a few times and they have loved that!'**

Valerie Freeborn, Education Support, Teacher

**'Seeing the family make their own friends, learn to communicate in English and receive the medical support they need has been amazing.'**

Jill Grinsted, Well-being, NHS administrator



## And there's more...

Beyond the core Community Sponsorship team has been a whole host of others who have welcomed the family and offered support.



The family at the launch of Sponsor Refugees

**OPPOSITE:** (clockwise from top left) dentist; newsagents; library; ESOL teacher; the family in the park; chemist; Morden Islamic Community Centre; school staff



**COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP** gives ordinary groups the opportunity to help a refugee family make a home in the UK. Here are the requirements for those wanting to sponsor:

- Be a highly motivated and committed group of people
- Have experience and skills in supporting vulnerable people
- Be a charity or link with one for the sponsorship
- Source suitable accommodation for two years
- Understand how to help a family access medical services, benefits and English classes
- Raise funds of £4500 per adult member of the family
- Gain consent from the local authority
- Develop a strong resettlement plan
- Be available for training and orientation

There's a lot of further information, resources and advice available. Please take a look at:

### THE HOME OFFICE

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship>

### RESET

[www.resetuk.org](http://www.resetuk.org)

### SPONSOR REFUGEES

[www.sponsorrefugees.org](http://www.sponsorrefugees.org)

‘... and it takes a family to make a community’

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If you would like more information on The Salvation Army's work with community sponsorship of refugees please contact us:

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