

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme FAQs

Following the decision in December last year to welcome three Syrian refugee families to Cornwall, we have been busy working with our partners in the public sector, voluntary organisations and the wider community to make sure we are ready.

We have been asked lots of questions which we have listed, with answers below.

What is the difference between a refugee, an asylum seeker and an economic migrant?

- **Refugee**

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.

The *1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* states that in the UK, a person is officially a refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the Government.

- **Asylum Seeker**

A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded.

- **Refused asylum seeker**

A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision. Some refused asylum seekers voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned and for some it is not safe or practical for them to return until conditions in their country change.

- **Economic migrant**

Someone who has moved to another country to work.
Refugees are not economic migrants.

Who are the refugees?

The people coming to the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme are in desperate need of assistance. The scheme prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin and includes women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others. They come from the areas and refugee camps around Syria so do not include people who have arrived in Europe.

All refugees will be screened for any security concerns by UNHCR before they get to the UK.

When will they arrive?

We expect the families to arrive in early Spring 2016. The exact dates will depend on UNHCR who identify and work with families in the refugee camps and the Home Office.

Where will they live?

In order to protect the families' privacy we will not be sharing information about where they will be living but it will be in the mid Cornwall area; we have made sure it is an area where there is suitable housing available and spaces in schools. The families will not be housed within social housing stock and later they will be free to choose their own home in the private sector.

How long will they stay?

Refugees are granted a five year humanitarian protection visa. After five years they can apply to stay for longer, or return to Syria depending on the situation there.

How will this be paid for?

The Home Office will provide Cornwall Council with funding that we can spend on making sure the refugees get the services they need.

How will we deliver this support?

We have recruited a voluntary sector organisation to deliver support to the families, who will help with things like translation, accessing services, filling in forms and settling into the community.

When will we welcome more refugees?

At the moment we don't know when or if more refugees will be resettled in Cornwall. The intention is that these three families are the first, and we will consider welcoming more. However, we want to make sure we have learnt from

our experience and have all the right services and processes in place before we consider inviting more families.

How can people help?

As there are initially only three families coming to Cornwall, and we don't yet know what they will need, not everybody will be able to contribute directly; however there are lots of ways people can help the people in Syria. There has been a heart-warming surge of support for the people who have found themselves in such terrible circumstances; People all over Cornwall have been involved in collecting everything from food, clothes, money, wetsuits, cooking equipment, to toothbrushes and sanitary items, and then taking them to people in need. Both ordinary people and professionals from Cornwall have been on the beaches in Greece lifting people out of the boats, feeding them and taking care of them.

There are details on the Council's website www.cornwall.gov.uk/syrianrefugees of how to make a donation or offer help.