Holywood Resettlement Group - Who we are and what we do

Moved by recent, devastating events in Afghanistan and determined to take action, local Holywood residents have come together to form the Holywood Resettlement Group set up to welcome an Afghan refugee family to our town.

Working under the wing of **Holywood Shared Town**, an established community organisation (and registered charity), our volunteer group aims to become a **Community Sponsor**, supporting a resettled Afghan family over a period of at least two years, helping them to adjust and make a new life in Northern Ireland.

Resettled families are vulnerable people forced to flee their homes in Afghanistan. They have all suffered the loss of their home and are separated from everything that is familiar. Many have lost loved ones, friends and family or survived violence and torture. Others may have specific medical needs or disabilities.

Supporting a vulnerable, resettled family is a significant responsibility. Most refugee families have been settled under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme coordinated by the Department for Communities. However, increasingly, local communities in Northern Ireland are keen to play their part through the Community Sponsor scheme to welcome additional families. Every Community Sponsor is approved by The Home Office (and The Department for Communities in NI/The Executive Office) and supported by **Reset**, an organisation funded by the Home Office to provide training and support to groups like ours. Once approved as a Community Sponsor, Holywood Resettlement Group will be matched with a family who have been identified as in need of resettlement by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

What will Holywood Resettlement Group do?

Our role is to support the family from the moment they step off the plane through their first year in Northern Ireland, offering a warm welcome and then giving the emotional and practical support they need to make Holywood their home. Above all, we will give the family friendship and the security of knowing they are part of our community.

Our responsibilities begin with raising £9000 to cover essential expenses in the first six weeks (food and clothing, interpreters, rent, heating, broadband etc) before the benefits to which they are entitled as refugees kick in. We will also secure affordable housing in the town for at least two years, find school places for the children and make sure the family is registered with a local GP and Social Services. We will organise regular English tuition for all the family and connect them with other services. As they settle in, we will support them to attend the local Job Centre, arrange local volunteering opportunities (Holywood Oxfam has already offered help), helping guide them towards employment and self-sufficiency.

We know we can rely on the people of Holywood to help us make the family welcome.

For further information **contact us**

Holywood Shared Town was incorporated as a Private Limited Company by guarantee (Company Number: NI617275) in 2013 and a registered charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (No. 101962) since 2016