

Syrian Refugees: Frequently asked questions

Why are we resettling families in Somerset?

We are responding to the Government's request for help and the desire within local authorities and communities to help. The Government has expanded its resettlement programme, and pledged to take 20,000 Syrian refugees over a five-year period. It's looking for volunteer councils to offer resettlement through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and authorities across the UK have been looking at what role they can play. There is a desire within the county's communities and local authorities to help.

Will there be any pressure on local services?

Accommodation is being provided through the private rented sector so there will be no impact on the district council housing waiting lists.

Families are only be resettled where the services, such as school places, health and social care, have the capacity to cater for them.

Is there a cost?

No. The scheme is fully-funded by Government so there will be no impact on council finances.

Who is deciding how many families will be resettled and where?

Working together, all five of the district councils, the County Council and health colleagues represented by the CCG have been in joint discussions and are making joint decisions.

How many families are to be settled in Somerset?

The authorities are planning to resettle six families, leaving the option open to accept more, depending on how resettlement works.

Why six families?

It's a measured approach in line with many local authorities, leaving open the option for us to resettle more families in the future.

We have to get this right. Somerset isn't an established 'asylum dispersal area' and not geared-up to cater for refugees - many of the organisations that would support refugees have no presence in the county.

We feel six is enough for us to deliver the support families may need and for the for the families to offer each other support.

Plymouth has initially taken three families, BANES have taken four and Wiltshire eight.

Where will families be settled?

The families will be settled in Mendip, South Somerset and Taunton Deane. This was based on the capacity of local services, for example the availability of school places, housing and support services that the families may need, such as health and social care. Families are not being resettled in areas where there isn't capacity to cater for them.

Why aren't any families being resettled in Sedgemoor or West Somerset?

Discussions highlighted Mendip, South Somerset and Taunton and Taunton Deane as the most suitable districts. This was decided looking at factors such as access to suitable housing, access to support services and things like transport links suggest that the other districts are more likely to be better suited.

We are also conscious that the planned Hinkley development could put a demand on services in that area of Somerset, as well as the very rural nature of large parts of West Somerset.

Representatives from Sedgemoor and West Somerset councils have been involved in all discussions and will continue to be.

What should people do if they want to offer a spare room to a Syrian family?

The accommodation needs for the six families have been met so there is no need for extra space.

What should people do if they want to offer a house to rent to a Syrian family?

The accommodation needs for the six families have been met so there is no need for extra space.

What should people do if they want to offer other support?

We understand that there are a lot of people who want to help locally and directly. The best thing people can do is follow the advice on the government's website [Syrian refugees: what you can do to help](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2). (www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2)

Key points include:

- Donations of clothes books are best made to established charity shops.
- Currently there is no need for the public to foster any unaccompanied Syrian children. If you're interested in adoption in general, please contact the County Council. For more information you can visit www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk or telephone 0800 587 9900.
- Financial donations. There are national charities and organisations, such as the Red Cross, Oxfam and National Council for Voluntary Organisations, which are offering effective support for refugees in the UK and would welcome donations.
- Arabic or Kurdish speakers or ESOL (English as a Second Language) teachers who would like to volunteer their services can email resettlement@somerset.gov.uk

Are there any Mosques in Somerset?

Yes in Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater. There are also prayer facilities elsewhere in Somerset.

Are you working with the voluntary sector?

Yes, we've been working closely with various community groups across the county, and will continue to do so.

Will any security checks be carried out?

All families being resettled in the UK under this scheme would have extensive security checks by the UNHCR and UK Intelligence services in the countries they are currently in.

Is this resettlement permanent?

The families being resettled under this scheme have Humanitarian Protection Status which gives them the right to remain in the country for up to five years. At that stage, if they've not already returned to their home country, their status will be reviewed by the Home Office.