



Supporting Syrian refugee families in Powys – advice for volunteers.

Thank you for your interest in welcoming and offering support for Syrian refugee families in Powys. Our approach is refugee centred with the aim that after a period of support, people will be able to live independently and successfully. This refugee centred approach is best achieved by public services, support workers, volunteers and host communities working together. This will help to ensure that people receive the services and support that they need and avoid duplication.

How we work

Syrian families resettled in Powys arrive through the Syrian Resettlement Programme. The programme is funded by the Home Office and support is provided with housing, health, education, English language lessons and welfare benefits. The families are placed into homes which are fully furnished, but with a basic level of furnishings. The families are able to claim benefits like any UK national and the DWP have made a commitment to ensure that the families benefits are in place soon after their arrival. The families arrive with a limited amount of luggage.

Caseworker support is provided by EYST. This includes preparing the new home and meeting and greeting at the airport. During the first week the EYST support workers provide intensive orientation, including registration and initial appointments across a range of services. This support continues for a year with a personal integration plan. After a year, support reduces, but can continue for a number of years. A successful resettlement results in people becoming independent and not remaining dependent on caseworkers or volunteers. Our ethos of support must be about helping the families to do things for themselves wherever possible, so their confidence, independence and self-respect grows.

Our watch words are **independence** and **empowerment**.

The aim is for all Syrian families to be fully integrated into their local communities as soon as possible, including:

- Speaking English (and Welsh)
- Volunteering
- Studying
- Getting involved in the community
- Returning to work

PAVO works with local community groups and voluntary organisations, supporting them to plan and co-ordinate their work with the resettled families, and to link with EYST's support service and Powys County Council

How can I help?

There are many ways that you can help, particularly areas that the public services do not cover. Any help will be different for each family, depending on their needs, wishes and level of independence. Please contact EYST or PAVO to find out the best way that you can help. Ways that you can help could include

- Showing families around the local area
- In an emergency, giving a lift to a hospital appointment
- Helping children with their homework
- Fundraising for toys for newly-arrived families with children

Visits to families' homes

- All the families that have arrived so far are Muslim, and it is considered polite in most Muslim households to take off your shoes as soon as you enter the house. Please don't wait to be asked. This gesture will set the right tone for your relationship with the family.
- We would ask for volunteers to wait three weeks before calling on a newly-arrived family. Some families have been inundated with visitors in the first weeks, which makes it hard for them to settle. Syrian standards of hospitality mean they will ply visitors with coffee, food and often a full meal. Numerous visitors are likely to drain the families limited resources so we would encourage you to arrange to meet them outside of their home
- Neighbours are very welcome to introduce themselves to Syrian families as they would with any other new neighbour.
- A lot of informal support will also be provided by other Syrian families who have already arrived.
- Could you meet family members outside the home? Encouraging family members to meet you in another community venue – library, coffee shop, community centre, family centre etc. – gets them out of the house, and helps them become more familiar with facilities in their local area.

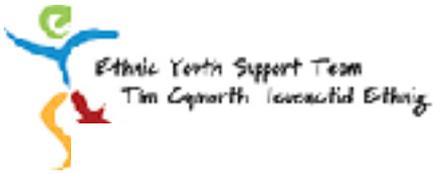
Letters

- The EYST support workers read official letters to the families on an agreed basis – usually once a week, on an agreed date and time. It is not necessary for volunteers do this. If a family member is anxious about a letter they have received, either encourage them to contact the sender directly or the EYST support workers.
- Please remember that Syrian families are entitled to their privacy and confidentiality the same as anyone else. If families get used to sharing confidential information with a wide range of people, there is a danger that this information will get into the wrong hands, and the families will then be vulnerable to exploitation.
- We have had instances where others have intervened on the families behalf with the very best of intentions but have ended up causing problems, as the EYST support workers may not know what has been done and the families may not be able to explain. Please check with EYST support workers that any help or activities that you are planning do not affect or duplicate existing support.
- Do not ask other services to write to you if they should be writing directly to the family.

Medical appointments

The EYST support service ensures that families are registered with a GP surgery, and are able to access other NHS services such as dentists, opticians and hospital-based services. The support service will accompany the families to the first visit, but the aim is for the families to attend most medical appointments themselves independently.

All NHS services in Powys have access to Language Line, and should be encouraged to use this where needed.



If volunteers give families a lift to a medical appointment, please respect the families' privacy and do not assume that you should accompany the family member into the examining room.

Summary

Successful resettlement will result in families living independently and leading full and successful lives in their new communities.

Thank you very much for your interest in helping to achieve this.

To find out further how you can help, please contact the organisations below:

EYST Support Team

Ystradgynlais contact Helal Uddin 07946148438 or helal@eyst.org.uk

Newtown contact Megan Bowler 07891381276 or Megan@eyst.org.uk

Powys Association of Voluntary Services (PAVO)

Contact 01597 822191 or sarah.leyland@pavo.org.uk

Powys County Council

Contact Simon Inkson on 01597 826631 or simon.inkson@powys.gov.uk