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Speaking notes for [Workshop on Community Sponsorships of Refugees](#)  
Rome, Sept 26-27, 2022

#### **WHAT'S WORKING WELL?**

1. Refugees are benefiting: welcome, friendships, integration (English /jobs); children – education and medical needs.
2. Volunteer training and support is good through there is room to develop it further.
3. Benefits to the community: members of the community get to know each other and work towards a common goal; strengthen parish groups and dialogue between a parish and their community.
4. At its core, sponsorship relies on community compassion, problem solving, and creativity – features that give these programmes the inherent potential to build on the local solidarity.
5. It is example of effective government and civil society collaboration. The scheme complements those resettled via local authorities through the new United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme.
6. The UK still offers some of the most generous resettlement terms competing with any developed country
7. Community sponsorship builds intimate forms of community connection that have positive impacts for refugees and welcoming communities alike. Sponsorship also builds important social capital – among sponsors, between sponsors and newcomers, and within communities – and creates 'trusted messengers' who can share positive stories about newcomers within their own peer groups.
8. Consultation and surveys by the Home Office and RESET to obtain the views of sponsors and participants in the scheme. In August 2022, a survey was conducted by RESET and the Home Office and was supported by the newly created Community Sponsorship Alliance – UK. Over 170 people completed the survey. The Community Sponsorship Alliance will be holding a separate focus group for people who have resettled through the scheme. Interpreters will be available.
9. The new Community Sponsorship Alliance-UK brings together stakeholders from across the Community Sponsorship movement to grow and improve the Community Sponsorship Scheme in the UK. Members include experts by experience, elected representatives of community sponsorship groups, Reset, and

nominated lead sponsors It also work closely with and receive advice from other organisations, such as Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI).

## **WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU FACING?**

1. If community sponsorship is to reach its potential to become a major pathway for the protection of refugees, a more ambitious vision is needed. Far more investment in infrastructure, collaboration between the parties involved and widening participation by others such as business and universities is needed.
2. Growth is a challenge – only 700 refugees have benefitted to date since the scheme began in 2016. This contrasts dramatically with the Homes for Ukraine scheme.
3. In CS, the “lead sponsor” (the charity) is key to establishing boundaries. Without a strong lead, interactions and emotional involvement permitted depend exclusively on volunteers who may not have sufficient experience and knowledge in establishing appropriate boundaries. *“I have Felt so Much Joy”: The Role of Emotions in Community Sponsorship of Refugees. Jenny Phillimore*
4. There is a danger that the growth of the scheme will be much slower than it needs to be and many more refugees who could be settled under the scheme will remain outside of the protection that this vital resettlement route offers.
5. Community Sponsorship will not grow at the pace needed to ensure it becomes an important pathway for refugee resettlement without setting out an ambitious target coupled to professional planning that takes into account the lead sponsors capacity to deliver the scheme.
6. The time it takes – over 1 year to establish ...bureaucracy!
7. Obtaining consent from Local Authorities; housing, language provision
8. There is a need to strengthen the community-based leadership of the scheme and the capacity of the lead sponsors to grow the scheme.
9. The principal sponsors are the lynchpin of the Community Sponsorship resettlement scheme.
10. The principal sponsors are the critical and pivotal animators of the scheme and need to be invested in if they are to work together more cohesively and strategically. It is their willingness to participate, take responsibility and manage risks in territory traditionally the domain of the Home Office and Local Authorities that makes sponsors so essential to the success of the scheme. Yet, Government or other coordinated funding does not currently extend to the principal sponsors.
11. A weaknesses of the refugee sector generally has been identified in a recent Migration Exchange Report<sup>[1]</sup> as a ‘lack of strategy and insufficient proactive collaboration, cross-sector communications and information sharing.’ It concludes that few networks share information and learn from each other and

the report advocates for the sector to 'pool its collective resources more if it is going to achieve significant policy changes'.

### **WHAT SUPPORT WOULD YOU LIKE IN ORDER TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE?**

1. Immigration policies: There is a tight space between hope and despair/destitution created by the modern state in the interests of border management that is often in contradiction to the wider understanding of human rights.
2. Train volunteers on Trauma informed care.
3. Involve refugees themselves in the scheme - conduct monitoring and evaluation with the family.
4. Encourage the family and the group to work in partnership to establish a plan
5. Encourage the group to refer the family to other refugees and appropriate professional support
6. The major players in the refugee sector such as the Refugee Council to encourage and engage with the smaller players.
7. Governments and community leaders also needed to find ways to advance in this fragile new environment, and work together towards expanding sponsorship programmes.
8. Streamlining the process – reducing bureaucracy / speeding up the permissions such as LA agreement / parity with LA's/ fast tracking, housing, blended model/marketing
9. Widening eligibility to participate – Naming, groups of 5, non-charities etc.
10. Strategic financial support from government and others to invest directly in those sponsoring charities that are developing the scheme. Without guaranteed income lead sponsors cannot plan ahead with confidence or scale up and sustain this important work.
11. The organised channelling of funding to the main charities who deliver community sponsorship at the grass roots.
12. A sustainable financial investment in the sponsoring organisations themselves who deliver the scheme at the grass-roots. To facilitate this joint venture significant philanthropic, business and government investment is urgently needed.
13. There has been several reports and evaluations<sup>[2]</sup> relating to the delivery of the Community Sponsorship scheme. However, these reports rarely focus on funding or the critical work of the principal sponsors<sup>[3]</sup> who fund the work themselves, carry the financial and reputational risks and are contractually accountable to the Home Office for the direct delivery of the resettlement scheme.
14. Community Sponsorship creates a new opportunity for FBO's to be acknowledged as progressive and harmonious with Catholic Social teaching.