

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2554

Title: Community Sponsorship Capacity-Building Programme

Executive Summary:

The Social Integration team seeks approval to spend £50,000 to build the capacity of organisations that take the legal responsibility of local groups working to welcome refugees under the Community Sponsorship scheme; and, thereby, to increase the number of groups successfully applying to sponsor families.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director, Communities & Social Policy approves expenditure of £50,000 towards the Community Sponsorship Capacity-Building Programme.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

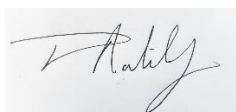
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Tom Rahilly

Position: Assistant Director,
Communities & Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

7 February 2022

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. This decision form seeks approval for expenditure of £50,000 to support efforts to resettle refugees, including those in need of resettlement as a result of the Afghan crisis, through the Community Sponsorship scheme. The funding will be used to build the capacity of Community Sponsorship groups, helping them overcome barriers to groups participating in Community Sponsorship. This work aims to improve the promotion and accessibility of the scheme and, in doing so, diversify the range of potential groups participating in the programme. This project will help to rebuild momentum in Community Sponsorship after refugee resettlement was temporary paused due to COVID-19. It will also enable the Community Sponsorship Programme to build on the goodwill Londoners demonstrated in response to the Afghan crisis.
- 1.2. Community Sponsorship enables Londoners to come together to provide support for the resettlement of refugee families in London. It operates in addition to support provided by local authorities. Individuals form groups to welcome, and provide support for, a refugee family in their local area. Community Sponsorship groups are required to prepare a resettlement plan; find suitable accommodation; and raise £9,000, which is used to help meet the needs of the family they support on their arrival (e.g. furnishing a house, paying for interpreters, initial subsistence until Universal Credit payments are established). The group then supports the family through their first year in the UK, helping them to live independent lives; learn English; access services (schools, healthcare etc) and employment; and participate in community life. Community Sponsorship groups are required to have a lead sponsor, which can be a charity or Community Interest Company. The lead sponsor takes legal responsibility for holding the funds, and for the ultimate care of the family that has been welcomed.
- 1.3. Community Sponsorship has benefits for those being resettled, opening them up to a pre-established support network and helping them settle in an area. There are wider community benefits too: working together in a Community Sponsorship group can strengthen local communities by creating new, and reinforcing existing, relationships between people. More widely, Community Sponsorship has the potential to provide long-term benefits for social integration, creating a more welcoming environment for all new arrivals – i.e., those supported by local authorities. Examples of successful support from Community Sponsors demonstrate how they help develop wider acceptance of newly arrived communities and how families welcomed into communities contribute back to their local areas – e.g., by supporting efforts during the response to COVID-19.
- 1.4. There are currently more than 320 Community Sponsorship groups in the UK, of which 66 are in London – the highest of any region. These comprise faith-based groups; groups of neighbours/local residents; and groups formed by, for example, employees of an organisation. To date, 32 groups in London have welcomed 34 families (163 refugees), and one group is due to welcome a further family by the end of January 2022. The remaining 33 groups are in the process of applying or forming their group.
- 1.5. Many groups face barriers to becoming Community Sponsorship groups, including difficulties in finding accommodation; the long application process; and the costs of covering lead sponsor organisations that may be small and/or newly established. Further, there is significant untapped potential in London to grow Community Sponsorship in order to meet the city's refugee-resettlement ambitions.
- 1.6. Delivery of the Community Sponsorship scheme is supported by Reset Communities and Refugees, which operates the UK's Community Sponsorship Learning Hub. Reset was set up in 2018, with funding from the Home Office, to coordinate the growth of the Community Sponsorship movement

across the UK. It delivers training that every Community Sponsorship group is required to attend; and supports local authorities and lead sponsor organisations to navigate the scheme.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Delivery method

- 2.1. The Community Sponsorship Capacity-Building Programme will provide funding to Reset, the national Community Sponsorship capacity-building organisation, to manage a small grants fund to support lead sponsor organisations. Lead sponsor organisations would be required to bid for the funding, with each bid demonstrating how it would enable a further Community Sponsorship group to successfully apply.
- 2.2. While there is a need to keep the fund flexible to meet the varying needs of different groups of individuals and organisations, this fund could cover activities such as:
- local outreach to encourage participation and applications; facilitate events to launch projects; promote activity to the wider community; recruit volunteers; and attract a greater diversity of groups
 - cover costs of lead sponsor organisations that may be newly established or smaller than current prominent organisations
 - develop resources that strengthen the organisation's delivery of Community Sponsorship projects, such as local integration plans
 - provide financial support for Community Sponsorship groups if needed, going towards the £9,000 they need to raise or going above this amount to provide greater financial security
 - match-fund staff resource to support the progress of Community Sponsorship groups.
- 2.3. A breakdown of the expenditure proposed for approval is summarised below:

Item	Approval to spend through this form
Small grant funding for lead sponsor organisations to bid into, to develop their capacity and overcome barriers to participation in Community Sponsorship.	£49k
Funding the national capacity-building organisation for Community Sponsorship, Reset Communities and Refugees, to administer the fund on behalf of the GLA. This will involve administering the criteria for applications, advertising the fund, receiving and assessing applications, and handling the money.	£1k

Impacts and deliverables

- 2.4. This fund will work to increase the extent of the Community Sponsorship scheme across London, to support efforts to resettle Afghan families. Resettlement through Community Sponsorship would be over and above local authority pledges, and aims to help strengthen wider social integration in the long term.
- 2.5. This fund will help widen the sectors and groups involved in Community Sponsorship groups in London. It will do this by supporting groups located in boroughs that do not have resettled families through the scheme, and groups that represent a diverse membership.
- 2.6. It is estimated that the fund will result in groups supporting a further 15 families in London. This would be in addition to the homes identified by local authorities.

- 2.7. This fund will build the capacity of lead sponsor organisations that provide the infrastructure for the Community Sponsorship scheme. It will therefore support future groups that might not benefit from this fund directly.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA must have 'due regard' of the Public Sector Equality Duty; that is, the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - advance equality of opportunity
 - foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The Social Integration work programme explicitly contributes to the Mayor's equality objective to "work with others to address the inequalities and barriers that limit some Londoners' ability to build strong relationships and be active citizens"¹.
- 3.3. The fund is intended to increase the diversity of organisations applying to be lead sponsors, with specific support given to smaller and local grassroots organisations to encourage applications to the fund.
- 3.4. Bidding lead sponsor organisations will be required to demonstrate a commitment to equality and inclusion in their activity, to ensure a greater diversity of people signing up to Community Sponsorship groups.

4. Other considerations

4.1. a) Key risks and issues

Risk	Mitigation action	Risk Rating – RAG: Red/Amber/Green
Community Sponsorship groups can take from a few months to over a year to prepare for their application, depending on factors including: the number of people supporting the initiative; the level of preparedness of the local community; securing the consent of the local authority; access to appropriate accommodation; and time it takes to raise funds and undertake all the necessary training and safeguarding checks. Therefore, the impact of the funding will take some time to demonstrate.	We will seek to mitigate this risk by working with Reset so that lead sponsors will only receive the fund if they ensure that applications are submitted within six months.	G

4.2 b) Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

¹ Objective 35 of the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mayors-equality-diversity-inclusion-strategy.pdf>

The Mayor's social integration strategy, All of Us, talks about the Mayor's commitment to promote Community Sponsorship. In pages 11 and 12, "Supporting Londoners to be active citizens", it is stated:

Improving social integration also means supporting greater participation. This is how Londoners play an active role in their community and city, and become involved in the decisions that affect them. The Mayor will [...] enable more Londoners to give their time and resources to help refugees by promoting community sponsorship, which brings together the goodwill and expertise of businesses and communities to welcome refugees.

On page 46, at Policy 2.3, "Coordinating Community Sponsorship", it is stated:

The Mayor will work with London borough councils, communities and civil society to develop London's approach to the community sponsorship of refugees.

The actions listed in this section include:

2.3.1 Through its dedicated Community Sponsorship Coordinator, City Hall will work with local authorities, communities, businesses and organisations to coordinate offers of support and expertise to help resettled refugees make London their home. These offers include homes, work and education opportunities, orientation support, and English language classes.

2.3.2 The Mayor will continue to promote community sponsorship. He will advocate for a warm welcome for resettled refugees arriving in London. He will also encourage and recognise the contributions of many Londoners to this cause.

4.3 In recent communications with government and to the public on the crisis in Afghanistan the Mayor has highlighted Community Sponsorship as an important part of London's response to welcoming arrivals. These communications include a [letter to former local government Secretary Robert Jenrick](#); and a Twitter thread, "[How you can help refugees](#)".

4.4 c) *Conflict of interest*

A GLA member of staff supporting on this programme, Senior Project Officer – Refugee Resettlement, is a previous employee of Reset Communities and Refugees, and continues to undertake some consulting activity with the organisation in a technical/administrative capacity that has no bearing on the direction or leadership of the organisation. This GLA member of staff does not have any delegated powers to approve this decision, and has nothing to gain financially from it. Reset is the only organisation delivering this work in the country, and is funded by the government to deliver the national Community Sponsorship Learning Hub. As such, no other organisation is in a position to coordinate this activity across London. The £1,000 fee that Reset will retain is purely to cover costs of administering the fund and they will receive no financial gain. Drafting of this decision has been overseen by senior members of staff with no connection to Reset.

5. Financial comments

5.1. Approval is sought for expenditure of £50,000, to build the capacity of lead sponsor organisations that provide the infrastructure for the Community Sponsorship scheme.

5.2. This expenditure will be funded from the 2021–22 Migration Support programme budget, held within the Communities and Social Policy Unit.

5.3. This programme sits within the mission, 'A Robust Safety Net'.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 6.1. The activity and delivery of this fund will be planned by Reset Communities and Refugees. Reset will administer the fund on behalf of the GLA; this will involve administering the criteria for applications; advertising the fund; receiving and assessing applications; and handling the money.

Activity	Timeline
Appoint delivery partner	January/February 2022
Launch the project	February 2022
Promotion through networks, social media and the Lead Sponsor recruitment campaign	February to December 2022
Applications open	March 2022
Applications assessed	March 2022 till November 2022, anticipating a five-day turnaround on decisions to accept.
Applications close	1 December 2022 or earlier, depending on the use of the fund
Close the project	December 2022

Appendices and supporting papers:

None

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Hannah Boylan has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 7 February 2022

✓

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature Fiona Marsh for Anna Casbolt

Date

7 February 2022

