

Herts Welcomes Syrian Families (HWSF)

Last month we reported on the Syrian Vulnerable People Relocation scheme.

To date, 214 people have been resettled. The scheme has been running since January 2014. The lack of uptake is certainly influenced by concerns in local authorities about their ability to provide services and to house newcomers.

These obstacles may well be addressed as part of the scheme's expansion and HWSF is meanwhile actively seeking solutions locally. At time of writing MP for Watford Richard Harrington has just been appointed to oversee the scheme and the HWSF steering group is writing to him.

What is happening in Hertfordshire?

- In St Albans, a motion has been passed and referred to scrutiny committee.
- Motion of support to be put to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council on 28th Sept
- Motion to be put in North Herts District Council in November
- Meeting with Leader and Deputy Leader of East Herts District Council took place 9th Sept.
- Public Meeting to launch network in Bishops Stortford on 9th October
- Watford groups have now joined HWSF and are organising to lobby councillors there.
- Individuals from all over Herts have joined the network.
- We have met with County Councillors for all the main parties
- We have met with Grant Shapps MP and he will be talking to other MPs and writing to the Council to ask about their plans.

- Other members across the county have meetings scheduled with their MPs.
- Meeting with representative from the Anglican Diocese has taken place and the Diocese is supporting HWSF through publicity.

The situation is changing constantly and this summary will be out of date by the time of printing the magazine.

What you can do

- Join our Facebook group!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HertsWelcomesSyrianFamilies>

You will find petitions to sign and other information. If you are not on Facebook, email me. I can send you these resources and add you to the mailing list.

- Lobby your District, County Councillors and your MP (we can send template letters for you to adapt or you can find them on our Facebook page).
- Sign the petition at <http://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/refugees-welcome-in-hertfordshire-4>
- Talk to people you know and groups you belong to about the project – the more people we reach the more chance we have to succeed.
- Let us know what you can offer e.g. willingness to be part of the housing steering group, knowledge about private landlord accommodation, interest in fostering, or skills that you have to offer.
- Help HWSF to identify local celebrities or key people to raise the scheme's profile.
- Write to your local paper or contact local radio to raise awareness and attract support.

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