

Cumbrian Martyrs' Parish Syrian Refugee Family Sponsorship Group

Meeting of 9/4/19

Present: Joe McGarry (chair), Teresa Heath, David Carrick, Kathleen Carrick, Eleanor McGarry, Donald Hitch, Andrew Heath (minutes), Peter Fisher (first half only), Zuzanna, Nykola Goodwill (standing in for Mandy)

Meeting started with prayers (led by Joe) at about 7:50pm.

Apologies for absence Mandy, Ged, Margaret, Fr Jim.

Previous minutes were agreed as correct.

Accommodation

Report Nothing new to report.

Questions/Discussion From talking to Sean, Teresa has been made aware of a problem with tenancy agreements. The problem is that rental of the house will have to commence a month or two before the family arrive in order for it to be prepared, but it will not be possible to have a tenancy agreement signed by the head of the family, as they will not be present to do so. Sean has advised that one solution is take out a 'company let', in the name of the diocese or Caritas, then sub-let to the family. Alternatively a temporary tenancy agreement can be made with one of the Group being named, which is then transferred to the family on arrival. It was thought the second option would be more attractive. There is the same issue with utilities. Teresa will ask Maureen D to check with the estate agents and look into this.

Benefits/employment

Report Teresa pointed out the report about Universal Credit (UC) presented at the previous meeting was incomplete, as it did not include child benefit. Child benefit is £20.70 (per week) for the first child, and £13.70 for subsequent children, and is **additional** to the child-component of UC. Eleanor reported that she had spoken to Shane Byrne (DWP), and that there are discretionary payments available if the housing-cost component of UC is insufficient to cover the rent. Joe says he's checked with HSBC about setting up a bank account for the family and been told they would accept a letter from the DWP to the family as proof of address. Teresa and Eleanor had been to the Job Centre to meet Shane. In summary, they learnt from him that:

1. Shane **is** the person to deal with about benefits.
2. Must have Biometric Residence Permits (BRP) available before arranging the interview;
3. Should aim to have bank account open before the interview takes place;
4. An online account for UC will be created at the interview;
5. Someone from Carlisle City Council will also attend the interview, to deal with Council Tax rebate, and if applicable the discretionary housing payment;
6. By default, the housing element of UC is paid to the family, not the landlord;
7. The interview will take up an entire morning;
8. A follow-up interview will take place four-weeks later to look into work prospects.

Questions/Discussions Teresa commented that we need more in the Plan about employment and voluntary work options.

Welfare/Health

Report Nykola read from the report that Mandy had e-mailed to her and Andrew. In summary:

1. Mandy had attended an 'International Women's Day' at Greystone Community Centre, attended by many Syrian refugee women and children. (She had been invited by Adrienne Gill - Cumbria County Council support officer). She was much encouraged by the support that has been provided to the refugees.
2. There is a weekly drop-in session at Greystone for refugee families.
3. There are now eleven refugee families in Carlisle.
4. The Syrian refugee group would be happy to support us in any way, and assist with the integration of the family that we hope to bring to Carlisle.
5. Mandy and Nykola have agreed to support the existing Syrian group.

Nykola explained that she is attending our meeting in Mandy's place, and offered her assistance. She works for the NHS, on the commissioning of health services, and works with the 'Migrant Health Group'. Her understanding is that the family would arrive with 'health passports', detailing their medical history. She has contacts who could advise on GP availability, but this would have to be done nearer the time of the family's arrival.

Teresa reported that she and Margaret had met with Mr Hussain (the Carlisle mosque representative). From this they had learned about some Muslim customs:

1. Shoes are removed on entering a house;
2. Tend to eat with hands;
3. Hand-washing is of great importance.

Also Mr Hussain provided some suggestions for a welcome-pack of groceries.

Teresa also reported that there is an open-day at Carlisle mosque this Thursday that she and Margaret will attend. Lastly, she mentioned that Margaret be will drawing up a currency conversion chart and a list of food prices, and sourcing local maps.

(Peter left at this point).

Questions/Discussions There was some discussion about provision of creche facilities for young children. Eleanor mentioned that the DWP would expect a mother to work if the children are over the age of four.

Education/ESOL/Interpretation

Report Teresa reported that professional interpreters are charged at £25 for the first hour, £20 per hour thereafter, plus travel costs.

Andrew read from a report that Ged had e-mailed to him. In summary:

1. Ged had met 'Alex', a Tunisian man employed by Gianni. Alex:
 - a) Offered to help with interpretation;
 - b) Volunteered the assistance of his fiancée (also Tunisian), a qualified Arabic/French/English teacher.
 - c) Knows of other Arabic speakers and will forward their names and contact details. (As yet these have not arrived).
 - d) Detailed information about availability of places at secondary schools is still being sought.

2. Ged had attended an ESOL class at the library, with Teresa. He had learnt from a student there that though there is a difference between, say, Tunisian and Syrian Arabic, it would not be a major problem.
3. Detailed information about availability of places at secondary schools is still being sought.

Teresa reported on her attendance at the ESOL class, which she had found very useful. She had asked the class if they could think of anything about their arrival in Carlisle that could have been improved, or any observations. Answers were:

1. One of the class showed Teresa a picture of what appeared to be hand-held shower and commented that they would have liked to have been provided with one on arrival;
2. Not enough time had been spent showing them round Carlisle and explaining things;
3. Interpreters not turning up for appointments;
4. The high cost of gas and electricity.

Questions/Discussions (none)

Finance/Fundraising

Report David read from a written report (which he passed to Andrew afterwards for inclusion in the minutes). In summary, further pledged donations have been received, giving a current total (with Gift Aid) of £9195. Pledged donations of £190 are still outstanding, which when received will (with Gift Aid), give a total of £9410. David has also drawn up an budget showing start-up costs to be covered by the Group (such as initial rent, furnishings etc), as well as recurring expenditure that the family will incur, such as rent, food and utilities. He believes that £9000 could be sufficient to cover the Group's expected expenditure. He quoted from some of the questions in the Plan which may be problematic, but believes that these can be satisfactorily answered.

Questions/Discussion There was some discussion about the £200 that the Plan requires to be given to each family member, also the cost of interpreters.

Safeguarding

Report Joe had nothing new to report.

Questions/Discussion Teresa mentioned that the arrangement is that Sean Ryan (Caritas) will draw up a safeguarding policy. Joe will ask Sean if this can be provided.

Project Management

Report Teresa passed round a sheet showing the schedule for the 14-week period before the family arrive, and the 2-weeks after arrival. She summarised the work that will have to be done during this period, and to be specified in the Plan. She commented that a rota will be required to cover volunteer interpreters and others. She pointed out that, given the schedule, if the Plan is submitted in June, this could mean the family arriving in October.

Questions/Discussion David asked if it is known at which airport the family will arrive. The answer is that we don't know, and it could be a regional airport. Teresa asked Joe if he'd be willing to research the welcome of the family. He agreed to do so. There was some discussion about when the draft Plan might be ready. Teresa will aim to produce one for early June. Andrew suggested that the draft Plan should be seen by all of the Group, so that each individual is fully aware of what the Plan commits them to. To ensure that the draft Plan is seen, Teresa agreed to circulate copies to all members of the Group, by e-mail or on paper. Any comments can then be made to Teresa, for her to make the necessary changes. The idea is that the resulting Plan will then be reviewed at the next meeting.

Any Other Business

None.

Next meeting

Given the decision on a target date for a draft version of the Plan, it was suggested that there should be a meeting in mid-June to review the Plan, and Tuesday the 18th June at 7:45pm was agreed.

Meeting ended with prayers (led by Joe) at about 9:15pm.