

Practical ways to help needy refugees

Q: WE'VE seen refugees fleeing conflict in Syria and elsewhere, and would like to offer them a place to live. How do we go about it?

A: Many of us will have seen the photos and footage of refugee families desperately trying to escape from the Middle East.

They may be running away from the threat of terrorism, or their homes may have been blown up by the conflict raging in their country. Whatever the reason, they became so desperate that they were prepared to embark on perilous journeys to seek sanctuary in other countries.

Currently 12 million people have been displaced due to the war in Syria, which is the single largest humanitarian crisis on the planet. Many have fled to other Middle Eastern countries, but a significant number have come to Europe.

The UK government has already said it will take 20,000 refugees from Syria by 2020. The Church has called for our country to accept more. But even as things stand, there are likely to be people

frequently asked questions

Last year's Archdeaconry consultations gave you a chance to ask central diocesan staff questions about their work. Those questions were noted down and are the basis of this Pompey Chimes feature, in which we ask your questions. This is the last item in this series

arriving in our county who need somewhere to live.

These refugee families are not plucked off the beaches, but come direct to the UK from UN refugee camps in and around Syria, where they have been assessed as suitable for the government scheme.

Local authorities are therefore looking for private landlords who can step forward and offer places to protect and shelter refugees. If you are thinking of helping those in need, perhaps this could be a way of doing so?

That doesn't mean giving up your property for free. Landlords will be entitled to receive local housing allowance rates. Lettings needs to be for a minimum of 14 months, but ideally up to three

years, so that resettled refugees have more stability.

Social or council or housing association property cannot be used, because of the long waiting lists in the south of England.

One local charity that is taking this problem seriously is the Rural Refugee Network, which aims to help resettle at least 25 displaced Syrian families in communities in Hampshire and West Sussex. The group includes professionals, churchgoers and other volunteers.

The Rural Refugee Network already supports three families, totalling 17 people, within our diocese.

They are aiming to make the move as smooth as possible by offering welcome packs, translation services and furniture –



Refugees families need your help

as well as finding accommodation with private landlords. You can contact them directly on enquiries@ruralrefugeenetwork.org.uk

Thousands of people have also offered up spare rooms to help resettle refugees. Unfortunately, neither of the two government-run resettlement programmes can accept such offers, and so they can't be used to help Syrian refugees in the short-term.

However, there are tens of thousands of destitute asylum seekers in Britain who are denied the right to work and often have no access to housing at all.

They urgently need people to

open their homes and are just as deserving of safety. You can connect with charities that help people with such hosting via the No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) on www.naccom.org.uk.

All Saints Church in Commercial Road also hosts a drop-in for asylum seekers and refugees, each Monday and Thursday morning. It is run by the Red Cross, and the charity Friends Without Borders, and offers food, clothes, professional help and legal advice in a supportive atmosphere. Your help would be appreciated – just ring 023-9283 9222.



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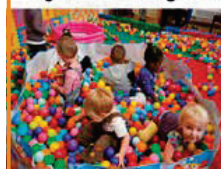
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