



# **SVP Refugee Orientation Support - Cornwall Students and Refugees Together (START)**

## **A report on START's work 2016-2020**



## Background

In September 2015 the British Government undertook to resettle 20,000 people fleeing from the Syrian conflict over the following five years (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/syrian-vulnerable-person-resettlement-programme-fact-sheet>).

Local authorities were invited to participate in the Vulnerable Person Relocation programme. Cornwall County Council (CCC) undertook to welcome thirty-nine people over three years and issued a competitive tender for provision of support. START bid for and was awarded the contract. The service would be tapered over time; the level of support provided to a family would reduce in the second year and again in the third so as to maximise and encourage the families' developing independence.

A phased approach to arrivals was taken as shown by the table below.

Phase	Date of Arrival	No. Families	Number of people on arrival	New babies	Total People
1	March 2016	2	8	2	10
	June 2016	2	5	1	6
2	November 2016	1	4	0	4
	December 2016	1	4	0	4
	February 2017	1	4	1	5
3	March 2017	2	10	0	10
	June 2019	1	4	1	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>44</b>

## The Service Specification

In preparation for the arrival of a family, START worked with the housing provider, Cornwall Housing Ltd, to arrange and install essentials if not already provided. This included basic furniture and living package in accordance with Home Office guidelines. Families were met at the airport on arrival in the UK and accompanied to the property identified by Cornwall County Council. Information and guidance about what to do in an emergency was shared and every family had an individual support plan that identified particular goals and outcomes tailored to their needs.

START provided initial orientation and practical advice about living in the UK, supported families to apply for benefits, access education and health services and at all times worked to promote social integration and independence, supporting families



to move on into secure long-term housing and employment opportunities where possible.

START facilitated necessary immigration documentation as required - obtaining a BRP card for example and supported the application for a National Insurance Number along with applications for benefits. START accompanied people to benefit appointments, completed forms, sent in relevant documents, made follow up phone calls as needed, worked with people to support the maintenance of their benefits, and offered help to open bank accounts and/or credit unions as needed.

START worked alongside and in partnership with the local council lead for education and learning supporting parents to apply for school places. Families were supported to look at schools, purchase school uniform and travel to the allocated school if distant from the temporary accommodation. Where requested START attended school meetings with parents and helped with free school meal applications. START supported people to apply to further or higher education and associated funding applications and linked with the Learning Centres to support the families to access English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.

The START worker registered people with Job Centre Plus and developed links to facilitate collaborative working so that the families were supported effectively, reducing the potential for destitution due to non-compliance of job seeking requirements. The START worker supported people to register with a GP, dentist and other health services such as opticians, mental health services and hospital consultants. Links were made with local existing groups providing support for Black Minority Ethnic people living in Cornwall. This included making links with the Voluntary Sector Forum in Cornwall and engaging with other third sector groups in Cornwall, e.g., Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change and the Cornwall Islamic Community Centre, in order to facilitate integration and reduce isolation for the families. START also offered access to community activities in Plymouth: allotment project, women's group, walking group and Cultural Kitchen, these activities provide opportunities for social interaction and reduce social isolation.

### **Local Provision**

During Phase 1 START provided a face-to-face service in Truro on 3 days a week, consisting of home visits, a drop-in service in the city centre. An interpreter was employed 2 or 3 days a week as needed.

During Phases 2 and 3 START rented an office space in Truro so that service users could drop in. Because of the increase in numbers the service was available 4 days a week service and as the worker in Truro spoke Arabic there was no need for a separate interpreter.



At the point of the newest family arriving in June 2019, the Truro office was staffed one day a week for drop-in and home visits were made to the new family as their location was not in Truro.

### **Ending the Contract**

The contract was fulfilled and, as an organisation based in Plymouth, START chose not to bid for the subsequent tender. The START service in Cornwall ended on 30/04/2020. Many positive outcomes were achieved including families successfully accessing education, housing, benefits, jobs and creating a community in these rural areas. All the families are settled in Cornwall and are increasingly independent. The contract manager was positive about the partnership and what had been achieved to improve the lives of families resettled in Cornwall. An online meeting was used for effective handover with the refugee coordinator now working for CCC.