



charitable incorporated organisation number 1183921

3a. SUPPORTING FAMILIES on Resettlement and HfU Schemes

1. Introduction

TWR exists to support integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the local community, and to provide this support as long as it is needed. It is independent of Somerset County Council Resettlement Team or other referring agencies, but will maintain close contact with them (see section 5 below). There are inevitably areas of information that cannot be shared between the statutory agencies and TWR, which can make resolving issues that families bring to us quite difficult, but despite the constraints we have agreed procedures for sharing concerns.

2. Befriending Circle

Traditionally, each new family, individual or groups of individuals is offered a circle of (up to) 3 volunteers as soon as feasible after arrival in the Taunton area, after they have requested our help. The role of the Befriending Circle is to provide a welcome, introduce people to the local community, encourage contact with other refugees or seeking asylum seekers, and to help solve any initial problems.

The Circle should explore with their family or group what will be the most helpful kind of support, as each situation will be unique. Some of the most pressing needs may well fall within the remit of the referring agency, in which case the role of the circle is to help people make the relevant requests. (It is not the role of a befriender to make those requests).

Other immediate needs may be very practical; where to obtain extra items for the house, how to catch a bus, where there are playgrounds for the children. It is not the role of the Circle to provide for physical needs - but to enable those we support to resolve the issues for themselves.

In addition to the Befriending Circles, TWR has other fully enrolled befrienders who can give 'specialist' support to circles. They have particular skills, such as experience with teaching English as a second

language, organising sports, or DIY skills. A circle can request help from one of these Supporting Befrienders or from our list of Supporters via the Trustee Link (however, the latter will not have been DBS cleared, so would always have to be accompanied by a TWR befriender)

Although befriending may well involve many practical elements of support, the underlying principle of becoming a friend will consist of all those intangible elements of friendship; understanding, empathy, mutual trust, patience, reliability, etc. There may be times when that is all that is asked of us or, indeed, all we can offer. If that is the case, we should never underestimate the value of that kind of 'invisible' support.

Families or individuals may express areas of interest, or concern, in which the Circle (or TWR) has no expertise and are also outside of the referring agencies responsibilities. The Circle Lead should refer these types of requests back via the Trustee Link. The Trustees will then investigate through its network of contacts (and with the referring agency if appropriate) to see how the matter might be resolved.

3. Befriending Circle Leader

Each Befriending Circle should appoint a leader at the earliest opportunity. This person would then be responsible for ensuring that an agreed method of recording visits is in place (such as Whatsapp), which should include a summary of:

- date, place and time of each visit
- those present
- activities undertaken
- concerns expressed or requests made
- agreed courses of action, including future visits

The Circle Leader should also be responsible for the setting up of two Whatsapp (or similar) groups – one for the family or individuals and befrienders to keep in touch with each other, and one just for the befrienders to keep each other informed. He/she should also be responsible for monitoring the content of these exchanges. These records should be written in such a way that they would always stand up to public scrutiny.

Once the circle is established, the Circle Leader should continue to make sure that contact is maintained with those befriended on a regular basis, and convene regular meetings of the befrienders to review their work, as needed. They will also be responsible for on-going communication with the resettlement worker(s) over general concerns, where appropriate.

4. The Trustee Link

Each befriending circle will be allocated a Trustee Link from among the TWR trustees. This person will be responsible for:

- making initial contact with the family or individuals, as soon as possible after TWR has received a request for support
- explaining the role of the Befriending Circle and how communications will work
- explaining what other help TWR can offer, including referral to other activities (language support, Forum network etc.)
- giving basic information, which should include contact details of the Trustee Link, names of befrienders, and a TWR leaflet
- explaining TWR's safeguarding, child protection, confidentiality and data protection policies in a simple and accessible way
- being involved in the selection of suitable befrienders for the family or individual
- establishing the link between the befriending circle and resettlement worker(s).
- arranging the first meeting of the Befriending Circle with the family or individual
- continuing to support the Befriending Circle throughout
- arranging an initial 3 monthly review with the family or individuals, then annual reviews or as required
- arranging 6 monthly reviews with the befrienders
- referring any concerns to the Trustees who, if necessary, will contact SCC via the TWR Liaison Officer.

5. TWR Liaison Officer

The Trustees have appointed a person to liaise with Somerset Council and other agencies, with a deputy for when that person may not be available. They will be responsible for:

- receiving details of new families or individuals requesting support and passing information to the Administrative Co-ordinator and Volunteer Co-ordinator, and discussing the appointment of a Befriending Circle
- reporting any concerns that the Trustees may have with regards to safeguarding, incidents of racism or possible radicalisation.
- passing any issues raised by the Trustee Link, passed on via the Befriending Circles, that appear to be causing on-going concern
- maintain a network of communications with other organisations involved in working with refugees and asylum seekers

- receive briefings on any new developments with regards to the families or individuals that TWR is supporting, or new information relating to the Resettlement Schemes or Asylum Applications.