IRPP Humanitarian Admissions Programme 2026 - FAQs

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TRAINING AND RESOURCES

What training will I receive for the Humanitarian Admissions Programme (HA)?

The Open Community provides an Interactive Learning Centre on its website to guide you through the Community Sponsorship Framework - an essential component for sponsoring beneficiaries through the HA Programme. Here, you can log in or register to complete four online training modules at your own pace. The full training takes approximately six hours, but you're free to start and stop whenever it suits you. Additional resources are also available in the Resource Bank on The Open Community website, allowing you to search by keyword, programme, topic or category.

Resource Links:

- The Open Community – Interactive Learning Centre: https://theopencommunity.ie/our-training
- The Open Community – Resource Bank: https://theopencommunity.ie/resources

The Open Community's Peer Support Network provides an opportunity for welcomers to connect and learn from one another. We host monthly online meetings where groups share their experiences, practical advice and useful contacts, and we facilitate a WhatsApp group to help participants stay connected. If you are invited to submit a full application, you will also be invited to join the network.

What other supports does The Open Community provide?

The Open Community has an online Webinar Series, to guide you at each stage of the HA process:

Webinar 1 = Introduction to HA26
Process, Requirements, Community Sponsorship Framework

Webinar 2 = Strengthening an HA Application
how to effectively demonstrate the three essential components: a clear protection need, a committed Community Sponsorship Group, and appropriate, adequate, affordable accommodation

Webinar 3 = Progressing HA26
CSG Constitution, Bank Account, Fundraising, Budgeting

Webinar 4 = Refining your Settlement Plan
Children First Training, Child Safeguarding Policy, HAP, Local Integration supports and services

Webinar 5 = Preparing to Welcome
Travel arrangements, appointments for PPSN, IRP, Intreo Office, Doctors, Dentists, and Schools

Webinar 6 = Integration & Post Arrival Supports
Implementing your Settlement Plan, supporting beneficiaries' needs, on-going supports

The Open Community are here to answer your questions and offer guidance on best practices, helping you feel prepared and confident in welcoming your beneficiaries and supporting their ongoing integration.

Resource Links:

- The Open Community – Webinar Series:
  (Invitations and links to be emailed out individually)

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP GROUP (CSG)

Who can be in a Community Sponsorship Group?

Participation in a Community Sponsorship Group is voluntary and applications are open to all kinds of community groups, including local community groups, faith groups, businesses, neighbourhoods, and charities, or any group of at least five people who have come together purely for the purposes of welcoming newcomers under the programme. Under the Community Sponsorship framework, individuals and communities come together to form Community Sponsorship Groups (CSGs). A CSG must be comprised of a minimum core group of five people (including a primary and secondary sponsor), all of whom must be over 18 and legally resident in Ireland.

Can someone be in a CSG if they are on a Stamp 2 or 3?

There are no restrictions around immigration permissions. Group members must be resident in Ireland and aged 18 years or older. The only consideration would be to ensure there is a replacement member if that person's permission expires.

Can someone be involved in different CSGs?

Yes, one person can commit to multiple Community Sponsorship Groups if they have the capacity to contribute.

Can one CSG apply for 2 families?

We recommend sponsoring one family at a time and ideally a single household family. However, if you can demonstrate your group has the capacity to provide sufficient integration supports and you have appropriate, adequate, affordable accommodation for all beneficiaries, then an application to welcome more than one family may be considered.

Can CSG members live in different counties to each other?

It's important to have group members based in the community where the beneficiary will be living. While it's fine to include current group members from outside the area, you'll need to engage additional local members near the accommodation to help provide on-the-ground support and a warm community welcome.

What skills and competencies are needed in a Community Sponsorship Group?

Community Sponsorship Groups will need to demonstrate that they have access to the skills, experience, and expertise required to support beneficiaries, either through the knowledge and experience of group members or by building partnerships with individuals and organisations in their local community. There is a wealth of knowledge, experience, and best practice available through the Peer Support Network to help groups build this capacity.

CSGs do not need to have any specific skills – anyone who lives in Ireland (18 years or older) can help share their experience and advice on living in Ireland. Soft skills are also a great benefit to the core strength of a CSG such as a collaborator, strong communicator, motivator, dependable person, committed, strong local knowledge etc.

Recommended or useful skills and competencies include:

Leadership – chairing meetings, coordinating tasks, and organising group activities.
Fundraising – planning and delivering fundraising events and initiatives.
Finance – budgeting, bookkeeping, or accounting experience.
Child safeguarding – experience as a Mandated Person or Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
Language support – the ability to provide interpretation or translation, or access to qualified interpreters.
English language tuition – experience teaching English or qualifications in ESOL/ESL.
Health and social services – knowledge of, or connections with, local health and social service providers.
Refugee and community support – knowledge of, or connections with, organisations supporting refugees, people seeking asylum, social inclusion, or local development.
Employment support – knowledge of employment services, training opportunities, or pathways into work for newcomers.
Community and cultural connections – links with places of worship, cultural centres, refugee support groups, and other community organisations.

What are the responsibilities of a Community Sponsorship Group?

Community Sponsorship Groups commit to providing support for a family or individual for a period of 18 months. Sponsors meet them in the airport on day one to welcome them to Ireland and bring them to their new home, help them to get set up and provide initial orientation.

Welcomers are responsible for helping with things like finding employment, connecting to social services, and enrolling in schools. They are also responsible for helping with other things such as sourcing language lessons or translation services if required and introducing families to local public transport and amenities. The group commits to providing all necessary integration supports to newcomers for the full sponsorship period of 18 months.

The Group is responsible for sourcing suitable accommodation, available to the beneficiaries for at least two years.

How do you find 5 people for your group and how do you explain the Humanitarian Admissions Programme to them?

People will have different motivations for getting involved in supporting refugee newcomers, but one reason is that they wish to not only help the beneficiary, but also the Primary Sponsor. To this end, it's advisable to reach out to your personal networks; those like-minded and supportive people within your professional network, school / alumni network, faith-based network, hobby groups, ethnic community etc. Sponsors come from all walks of life, so explore all your available networks to recruit members. Provide your reasoning for getting involved as a conversation starter and then "invite" them to join you (giving reasons how and why they will add value to your group).

When someone shows interest, continue to build detail on the elements of the programme and encourage them to watch a welcomer's story, located on The Open Community website:

Resource Links:

- The Open Community:
  https://theopencommunity.ie/become-a-welcomer

What happens at the end of the sponsorship period (18 months post arrival)?

One of the unique features of Community Sponsorship is the ability to empower the beneficiaries to live an independent and successful life in Ireland. This includes phasing out the beneficiaries' reliance on the group and providing only as much support as they need. Groups are encouraged to continually work with the beneficiaries towards self-sufficiency throughout the sponsorship period. Some benchmarks of self-sufficiency include but are not limited to: proficient English language skills obtained, employment/self-employment secured with sufficient income to cover living expenses; and the ability to conduct day-to-day tasks such as paying bills, paying rent, budgeting, navigating the local area and accessing local transport networks.

The CSG is also encouraged to meet with the beneficiaries throughout the sponsorship period to discuss how they are doing, their goals and the support being provided by the CSG so any adjustments can be taken into consideration as the end of the sponsorship period approaches.

Planning for the end of the sponsorship period should be considered from the very beginning of the group's formation. You can find resources to support this on The Open Community website.

Resource Links:

- The Open Community – Moving On:
  https://theopencommunity.ie/resources

How do you register a Community Sponsorship Group?

Along with a Proposal Form, a Community Sponsorship Group will be required to complete an Application Form. This details the individual group members, their skills and contribution towards the safe arrival and integration of a beneficiary(ies). If approved by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), the CSG will be a 'recognised Community Sponsorship Group' with permission to proceed to the next stages of fundraising and creating a Settlement Plan.

ELIGIBLITY CRITERIA

Who can I sponsor?

The Humanitarian Admissions Programme is based primarily on demonstrated protection needs and is not designed principally as a family reunification pathway. While the wider EU legal framework provides for family reunification in certain circumstances, admission under HA26 will be considered primarily on the basis of vulnerability and protection need rather than family connection alone.

The target group for admission is people who fall within at least one of the following categories of vulnerable persons:

- Women and girls at risk.
- Survivors of violence or torture, including on the basis of gender or sexual orientation.
- Persons with legal and/or physical protection needs, including protection from refoulement.
- Persons who lack a foreseeable alternative durable solution, particularly those in a protracted refugee situation.

In addition, the programme may include individuals who have been exposed to particular risk because of their work, profile or public role, including human rights defenders, women's rights activists, journalists, educators, cultural figures, academics, or others facing concrete and personal risk arising from conflict, persecution or serious human rights violations.

Who is excluded from sponsorship?

The current programme excludes:

- Individuals who have served as members of their national government or its military or security apparatus.
- Individuals who are already under consideration for resettlement.

Are ethnic minority groups considered within the eligibility criteria?

Yes, ethnic and religious minorities who are facing systemic discrimination or persecution are eligible to be proposed for the Humanitarian Admissions Programme.

ACCOMMODATION

How long do you have to secure accommodation for?

Accommodation must be secured for a minimum of two years to provide stability for beneficiaries during their initial integration period, as they work towards financial independence and develop an understanding of the housing market in Ireland.

When do you need to secure accommodation and provide proof?

The IRPP place high regard on secure accommodation. In your proposal, you should clearly outline your accommodation plans, demonstrating that the proposed accommodation is appropriate, adequate, affordable, reliable, and sustainable.

Following the IRPP's assessment of the Proposal and Application Forms, groups will be notified whether they have been approved to progress to the next stage. Approved groups will then begin fundraising and complete their Settlement Plan. As part of the Settlement Plan, groups must provide evidence that suitable accommodation has been secured (for example, a letter of intent, lease agreement, or licence agreement), and the property must successfully complete an inspection to comply with minimum rental standards.

What is the best way to demonstrate to the IRPP that accommodation has been secured?

Accommodation for the beneficiaries must be secure before you seek final approval from the Minister and before the IRPP arrange travel to Ireland. Securing accommodation can be done several ways and this is where the Community Sponsorship Group and their network play an influential and important role. Using your local knowledge and contacts in your community, you ideally will source accommodation with a landlord that you have a pre-existing relationship with or have built up a rapport with over the initial stages of the programme. This will allow you to make an arrangement with them to secure the accommodation. The best way to secure this and demonstrate to the IRPP the legitimacy of this arrangement, is by means of:

- Memorandum of Agreement (not always legally binding, but a signed document between the CSG and landlord detailing your agreement, showing a serious intent to cooperate)
- Good Faith Letter from the landlord or Estate Agent (detailing the properties availability and intent to rent to your beneficiaries)
- License Agreement (signed agreement from a property owner committing to a non-rental use of the property)
- Lease Agreement (past CSGs have signed lease agreements between the landlord and CSG initially and then transferred the lease into the beneficiaries' name upon arrival. If landlords are happy to wait until the beneficiaries arrive, this is also an option)

Resource Links:

- License Agreement Information and sample:
  Rent a Room - Voluntary Regulatory Framework

- Tenant rights and responsibilities and Tenancy Agreement Template:
  https://www.rtb.ie/registration-and-compliance/rights-and-responsibilities/tenant-rights-and-responsibilities

What are the minimum standards for Rented Residential Accommodation?

By law, landlords must ensure that their rented properties provide tenants with a safe and healthy environment to live in and comply with the Minimum Standards as set out in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019.

Examples include free from damp, hot and cold water available, adequate ventilation and heating, appliances in good working order, fire blankets, heat and smoke detectors in working order.

All types of accommodation will be subject to a property inspection.

Resource Links:

- Residential Tenancies Board:
  https://www.rtb.ie/images/uploads/general/Minimum_Standards_and_Fire_Safety_Leaflet_v3_2021_Final.pdf
- Irish Statute Book:

https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/si/137/made/en/print

Can we get shared accommodation for the family?

Accommodation must be appropriate, adequate, and affordable, and your proposal should clearly explain why it meets these requirements. Consider the following:

1. **Appropriate** – Is the accommodation culturally appropriate? Does it provide sufficient privacy and security?
2. **Adequate** – Is there enough living space? Does it provide reasonable access to transport, schools, healthcare, and other essential services?
3. **Affordable** – Will the accommodation be financially sustainable, taking into account the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the beneficiary's likely income?

The aim is to support beneficiaries to live independently in accommodation that is safe, suitable, and sustainable over the longer term.

Depending on the circumstances, the IRPP may consider shared accommodation appropriate for a lone beneficiary or, in some cases, two beneficiaries, provided there is sufficient space and the arrangement offers privacy, security, and stability. Shared accommodation for families would generally need to be carefully justified to demonstrate that it meets these requirements.

Where shared accommodation is proposed, it is important to consider compatibility, trust, and the reliability of the living arrangement. We also recommend using our Home Sharing Agreement to help establish clear expectations and support a positive shared living experience.

Resource Links:

- Home Sharing Agreement:
  https://theopencommunity.ie/resources

Who pays rent on the accommodation?

While securing accommodation for the beneficiaries, it's advisable for CSGs to budget for the expense of a rental deposit and rent for 3-6 months while applications are being processed for Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Once HAP is in place, the relevant Local Authority (County Council) will pay a majority portion of the rent, with the beneficiaries paying an affordable top up in addition to a percentage contribution to the Local Authority.

What is the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)?

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support provided by your Local Authority (County Council). Beneficiaries must apply for Social Housing Support before receiving a HAP application and qualifying to apply. HAP allows beneficiaries to work full-time, while still receiving housing support.

Local Authorities make a monthly rental payment to the landlord. In return, the HAP tenant pays a weekly contribution towards the rent to the Local Authority.

Resource Links:

- Hap.ie:
  https://www.hap.ie/
- Citizens Information – HAP rates:

https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting-a-home/help-with-renting/housing-assistance-payment/#f60791

Are there any other financial supports for housing?

Rent Supplement is a means-tested payment for certain people living in private rented accommodation who cannot pay the cost of their accommodation from their own resources.

It is a short-term income support for people in the private rented sector.

Beneficiaries of HA do not meet the conditions as published, however it's advisable to talk to your local Intreo office to initiate a 'Hardship' case due to the specific situation of your beneficiaries and their inability to meet the requirement of living in private rented accommodation for at least 6 months prior.

Before proceeding with this application, have the following prepared:

1. Proof of application for social housing support
2. A one-month daily expenses record
3. Proof of income details (e.g., bank statement or social welfare statement)
4. Tenancy agreement
5. Additional document(s) requested in the RS application
6. A hardship case explanatory letter, detailing the family's legal status, arrival date, the program under which the family arrived, financial circumstances, and the risks the family face, including the potential inability to cover rent from their own resources, leading to the risk of poverty and homelessness.

Resource Links:

- Citizens Information: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/supplementary-welfare-schemes/rent-supplement/

What are tenancy rights?

The main rights and responsibilities as a tenant come from landlord and tenant law, as well as from the lease or tenancy agreement you have with your landlord.

The Residential Tenancies Board was set up under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to regulate the private rented sector.

Resource Links:

- Tenant rights and responsibilities: https://www.rtb.ie/registration-and-compliance/rights-and-responsibilities/tenant-rights-and-responsibilities

FUNDRAISING

What is the fundraising requirement for HA?

Community Sponsorship Groups (CSGs) are required to demonstrate that they have a minimum of €10,000 on hand to support the sponsored beneficiary or €5,000 in the case of an individual, of which a maximum of €2,000 may be in-kind contributions (e.g. a commitment given to provide professional interpretation services, English classes, childcare etc. free of charge). Groups are required to raise funds to demonstrate commitment, support the implementation of their Settlement Plan and cater for unexpected eventualities.

How do Community Sponsorship Groups Fundraise?

CSGs are encouraged to develop a fundraising plan with realistic targets. A broad approach can be useful, mixing fundraising with donations from local businesses for example.

Resource Links:

- The Open Community Resource Bank - Fundraising: https://theopencommunity.ie/resources

Can we organise public fundraising events?

Yes, many groups have had huge success with hosting auctions, sponsored walks and coffee mornings amongst other activities.

The Open Community has a free Insurance Policy available to all approved Community Sponsorship Groups, that will provide public liability cover as you carry out your fundraising activities.

When can we begin fundraising?

Fundraising for community sponsorship can only begin following approval of a Group's application. Fundraising must be conducted specifically for the benefit of the family they are assigned to support under the programme.

Can we use The Open Community's CLG / Charity number when fundraising?

Approved CSGs are unincorporated associations established on a not-for-profit basis. They are not charities as they typically aim to support just one family at a time or one beneficiary at a time. Approved CSGs do not need to be a registered charity to raise money to support a particular newcomer or family.

It it is not a problem for CSGs to raise money to help particular families, but it would be if CSGs were raising money to help a class of persons, for instance refugees or resettled refugees. It would then be an offence under s.46 of the Charities Act 2004 for an organisation, other than a registered charitable organisation, to present itself in such a way that would cause a member of the public to believe that it is a charitable organisation.

Can we use our own personal bank accounts to hold the fundraising money?

A dedicated account must be set up for the purposes of administering and holding in trust any funds raised with appropriate oversight and controls established – for instance a minimum of two co-signatories should be required prior to any withdrawal.

Can the fundraising include money received from outside of Ireland via international transfer? And can individuals or charities abroad contribute to this fund?

There should be no tax liability that arises for members of the refugee family or the individual refugee who receive assistance from the CSGs, however we would recommend that CSGs are aware of the possible tax implications if very large gifts are received.

Are there tax implications for CSGs when fundraising?

No tax liabilities should arise from general community fundraising of the type undertaken by CSGs, however we advise that CSGs make themselves aware of the possible tax implications if very large gifts are received.

Resource Links:

- The Open Community Resource Bank – Financial Safeguards: https://theopencommunity.ie/resources

What is the money used for?

In the first few months after arrival, the beneficiary will typically require a range of financial supports, to cover expenses such as food, medical expenses, clothing and educational materials, including books and school uniforms etc. Depending on their individual circumstances, some beneficiary households may qualify for supplementary or discretionary welfare schemes, such as the Exceptional Needs Payments.

It's necessary to budget for the period between the beneficiaries' arrival and when they have access to social welfare and other financial support services (such as HAP to assist their rent).

CSGs are expected to demonstrate that they have fully considered the needs and requirements of each beneficiary and to plan financial needs accordingly. Additional funding may also be required to ensure that the beneficiaries can participate fully, to the extent they wish to, in local society and community activities. However, this provision of support should be balanced with the ultimate goal of the beneficiaries becoming financially and otherwise self-sufficient by the end of the sponsorship period.

APPLICATION PROCESS & APPROVAL STAGES

What are the approval stages?

There are 3 approval stages throughout the HA journey: After the Proposal Form and Application Form submission, after the Settlement Plan submission, and a final approval by the Minister for Justice.

How are Proposals scored?

The IRPP does not use a points-based assessment. Instead, it first considers whether the proposed beneficiaries meet the programme's eligibility criteria, including the requirement to be residing in a third country to which they were forcibly displaced.
Where beneficiaries are eligible, the IRPP will consider the Community Sponsorship Group's capacity to deliver the programme successfully. Particular emphasis will be placed on the group's ability to secure accommodation that is appropriate, adequate, affordable, and sustainable, together with its overall preparedness to support beneficiaries throughout the sponsorship period.

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Arna chomhchistiú ag an Aontas Eorpach

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LOCAL WELCOME GLOBAL IMPACT

SETTLEMENT PLAN

Where can I find the Settlement Plan?

The Open Community will send out the HA Settlement Plan Template to those groups who are progressing past the first approval stage (CSGs whose Proposal and Application Forms are approved by the IRPP).

If you wish to begin thinking about the integration supports and what you will need to consider, you can find an example of the Settlement Plan from Community Sponsorship Ireland on our website.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SETTLMENT PLAN YOU WIILL BE REQURIED TO COMPLETE IF YOUR APPLICATION PROGRESSES WILL BE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT, BUT THIS VERSION CAN GUIDE YOUR CONSIDERATIONS AND PLANNING:

Resource Links:

- The Open Community Resource Bank – Community Sponsorship Ireland Settlement Plan Template
  https://theopencommunity.ie/resources