



Humanitarian Admissions Programme

In 2026, Ireland continues its commitment to providing safe and legal pathways for people with international protection needs. At a time when opportunities for humanitarian admission and resettlement are becoming increasingly limited across Europe, Ireland remains one of the few countries offering communities the opportunity to nominate individuals with demonstrable protection needs for admission to Ireland under a Community Sponsorship model.

Communities across Ireland play a central role in the success of this programme. Through Community Sponsorship, local groups are invited to demonstrate solidarity with people affected by conflict and persecution by taking an active role in welcoming them to their community. Community Sponsorship Groups receive comprehensive training and ongoing support to equip them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to assist beneficiaries in rebuilding their lives in Ireland and integrating into safe, welcoming and inclusive communities.

Context

Between 2021 and 2024, Ireland welcomed more than 700 humanitarian cases from Afghanistan through the IRPP Afghan Programme. This work continues through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme's (IRPP) Humanitarian Admissions Programme, which prioritises at-risk individuals such as human rights defenders, women's rights activists, LGBTQ+ individuals and journalists. Thanks to the dedication and commitment of communities across Ireland, 51 Afghan nationals were welcomed to Ireland through the 2025 Humanitarian Admissions Programme.

The 2026 Humanitarian Admissions Programme (HA26) allows for the admission of up to 50 people.

HA26 has been developed by the IRPP in the context of the [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#), which came into effect on 12th June 2026 across all EU Member States. The Pact introduces a new framework for migration and asylum management in the EU, including stronger identification, registration and procedural requirements. While HA26 reflects Ireland's continued commitment to humanitarian admissions, it must operate within this changed policy environment. Significantly, the new framework requires that eligible beneficiaries must:

- already have been displaced to a third country at the point of application, and
- that relevant biometric data and pre-departure orientation information must be gathered in advance of travel

Eligibility Criteria

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.

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.

Operational requirements

HA26 will operate over a condensed implementation period of less than six months in 2026. In addition, the wider EU framework for humanitarian admission and resettlement requires admission procedures be carried out in a structured and time-bound way. For that reason, applicants must also meet the below practical programme requirements:

- Beneficiaries must hold a valid passport or travel document.
- Beneficiaries must be visa compliant in the third country to which they were forcibly displaced.
- Beneficiaries over six years of age must be willing and available to provide biometric data prior to travel.
- Beneficiaries must be able to complete pre-departure processes, including orientation and any required administrative checks, before travel.
- Beneficiaries must be able to travel in 2026.

Prioritisation

Because of the compressed 2026 timeline and the administrative requirements that now apply, the programme will give preference to applications that are most feasible to progress within the available period. This means preference will be given to larger family groups, as defined in Appendix A, and to applicants residing in third countries where Ireland has good consular relations and where pre-travel biometric processing and other checks can be facilitated.

What is Community Sponsorship?

Originating in Canada in the 1970s, Community Sponsorship is a model that brings local people directly into the welcome and integration process for refugees. Rather than relying only on statutory services, it enables community groups to take an active role in supporting individuals or families as they arrive and begin to settle in Ireland.



The model is built on solidarity, practical support and community engagement. Community Sponsorship Groups help with the essentials of starting a new life, including finding accommodation, connecting with local services, supporting language learning, and helping beneficiaries to build social and professional networks in their new community.

It also helps foster understanding, inclusion and stronger connections between newcomers and the communities that receive them. Often sponsors and beneficiaries have a life-changing and enriching experience, and it has been shown to bring communities together.

Application Requirements

HA26 uses the framework of Community Sponsorship, which emphasises a community-led approach to welcome and integrate an individual or family. To apply, each application must be submitted by a Community Sponsorship Group (CSG), made up of local people who are willing to take shared responsibility for supporting beneficiaries after arrival in Ireland.

Minimum Group Requirements

To be eligible to apply, a Community Sponsorship Group must:

- Appoint a Primary Sponsor who can lead the group and coordinate its work.
- Have a minimum of five members.
- Ensure all members are aged 18 or over and resident in Ireland.
- Be in a position to provide local knowledge and practical support in the locality where the beneficiaries will live.

Group Responsibilities

Community Sponsorship Groups are expected to take responsibility for several key elements of the programme. This includes:

- Raising a minimum of €10,000 for a family, or €5,000 in the case of an individual, with up to €2,000 permitted in kind.
- Securing appropriate, adequate and affordable accommodation for two years.
- Researching, documenting and putting in place local integration supports for the first 18 months after arrival.

Applying to the Programme

Groups should consider these requirements carefully before applying. The application process is designed to assess whether a group has the capacity, commitment and local support needed to provide a safe and sustainable welcome for beneficiaries.



Application Process and Approval Stages

The Open Community have been appointed as the IRPP's partner organisation to administer the programme for 2026 and will support you through the below process.

1) Attend an Information Webinar

Interested groups begin by attending an information webinar to learn more about the programme and the responsibilities involved.

2) Form a Community Sponsorship Group

Form a Community Sponsorship Group of at least five Irish residents.

3) Submit an Expression of Interest

Groups must submit an Expression of Interest for the HA26 programme.

4) Assessment of Expressions of Interest

Expressions of Interest will be assessed against the programme eligibility criteria. Eligible groups will be invited to complete further training and submit a full application.

5) Submit the full application

Eligible groups must submit the Application Form and Proposal Form.

6) Stage 1 Approval

The IRPP will review applications and select groups to progress.

7) Fundraising, accommodation and settlement planning

Successful groups will begin fundraising, secure accommodation, and develop a Settlement Plan.

8) Submit the Settlement Plan

Groups must submit their Settlement Plan for review.

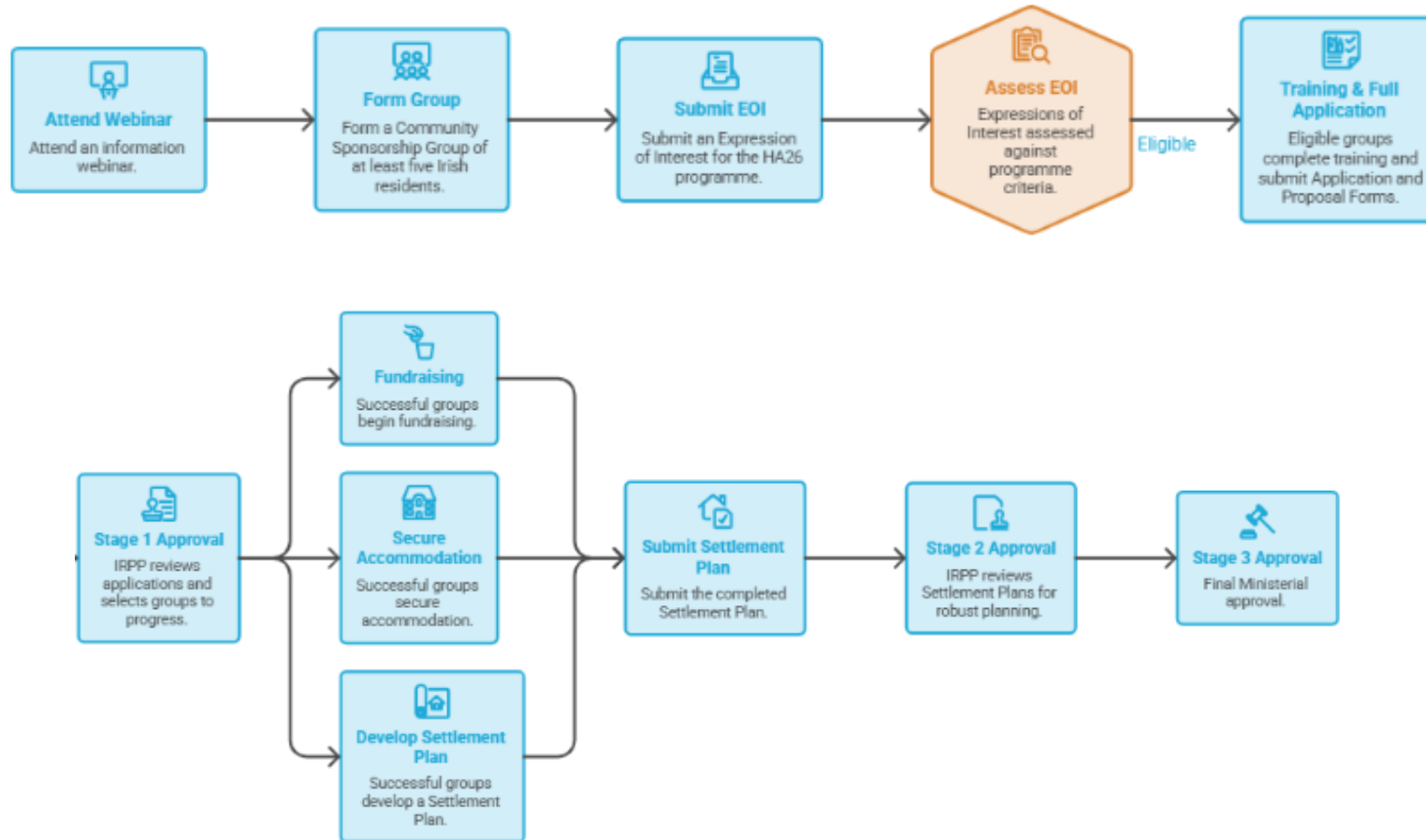
9) Stage 2 Approval

The IRPP will review Settlement Plans to ensure robust planning.

10) Stage 3 Approval

Applications that successfully complete the earlier stages will proceed to Ministerial approval.

IRPP Humanitarian Admissions 2026 – Application Process



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-Funded by the
European Union

THE
COMMUNITY
LOCAL WELCOME GLOBAL IMPACT



Training and Supports

The Open Community provides online training, information webinars and tailored guidance to groups throughout the HA26 application process.

Their mission is to empower people across Ireland to support refugees through community welcome. They work with individuals, groups, and partners to help newcomers settle in safety and dignity. You can find out more at www.theopencommunity.ie

Getting Started

If you are ready to find out more, take these next steps:

- 1) Register here to attend our Information Webinar on Wednesday 15th July (7.30pm):
www.theopencommunity.ie/project/humanitarian-admissions
- 2) Complete the online training* to give you a full understanding of the responsibilities of welcoming and integrating an individual or family
<https://theopencommunity.ie/our-training>
- 3) Form your Community Sponsorship Group and begin work to secure accommodation for 24 months (appropriate, adequate, affordable).

* Please note that the training references the need for Garda Vetting, but this is no longer a requirement. For the purposes of the training, your regional support organisation for HA26 is The Open Community.

Important Dates and Deadlines

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
Wednesday 15th July	Information Webinar
9am Monday 27 th July	Deadline for submitting Expression of Interest
9am Monday 10 th August	Deadline for submitting Application Form



Appendix A: EU Pact on Migration and Asylum Definition of Family

In the case of humanitarian admission, the family members, as referred to below, of third-country nationals or stateless persons legally residing in a Member State, or of Union citizens.

- (a) the spouse or unmarried partner in a stable relationship, where the law or practice of the Member State concerned treats unmarried couples in a way comparable to that of married couples under its law relating to third-country nationals or stateless persons;
- (b) the minor children on the condition that they are unmarried and regardless of whether they were born in or out of wedlock or adopted or recognised as defined under national law;
- (c) the father, mother or another adult responsible for an unmarried minor, whether by law or by the practice of the Member State concerned;
- (d) the sibling or siblings;
- (e) third-country nationals or stateless persons who are dependent on their child, parent or other family member for assistance as a result of pregnancy, a new-born child, serious mental or physical illness, severe disability or old age, provided that family ties existed in the country of origin, that the child, parent or other family member is able to take care of the dependent person, and that the persons concerned expressed their desire in writing.