

Introduction

Contextual Information

Who are the new arrivals?

- New arrivals are pupils who are admitted to school other than at the usual times of joining.
- New arrivals can be pupils from any ethnic or linguistic background
- In Wales we may see refugee children arriving under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme or the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Programme, or via family reunion.
- All but one Welsh local authority had resettled refugees from the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme by December 2017, and several Local Authorities have resettled families from the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.

Who is an asylum seeker?

- An asylum seeker is a person who has crossed an international border and is seeking safety or protection (recognition as refugee) in another country.
- An asylum seeker is someone who declares themselves to be a refugee but whose claim has not yet been determined by the Home Office.

Who is an unaccompanied asylum seeker child (UASCs)?

- Children under 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin and *not* accompanied by a close relative/legal guardian.
- Main countries of origin: Afghanistan, Albania, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Vietnam, Syria and Ethiopia.
- In 2017, there were a total of 2,206 Unaccompanied Children Applications in the UK.
These children arrive in the UK seeking safety from countries where the state cannot protect their rights as children. This may be due to conflict, political instability or other reasons for which the child is persecuted in their country of origin.

Of this 2,206 55% were granted refugee status. 2017 saw a decrease of 33% in the number of Asylum Application by Unaccompanied Children from 2016. This is the first drop in applications since 2012. From 2010 to 2013 there was a downward trend in the number of applications. In recent years they rose, but still accounted for just over 8% of all asylum applications in 2017, compared with over 16% in 2008.

[https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0004/2701/Children in the Asylum System Feb 2018.pdf](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0004/2701/Children_in_the_Asylum_System_Feb_2018.pdf)

Who is a refugee?

- A refugee is someone who has had to leave his or her country and who is afraid to return there

'Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.'

How does the Home Office choose who comes to the UK under resettlement?

Resettlement Programmes are based on need identified by UNHCR in refugee camps and other places where people have been displaced by the Syrian conflict. Women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others.

The Home Office are working with a wide range of partners including local authorities and civil society organisations to ensure that people are integrated sensitively into local communities.

How can people help now?

People can already make donations to charities and volunteer to help local refugee support groups. Local authorities would encourage that to continue but we will also be consulting partners on options to do more - including ways to sponsor refugees alongside those supported by the government.

Vetting and checks

Identification of families for resettlement and the vetting process is very rigorous and has taken a number of weeks to complete, to ensure that the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict are identified.

The families come from settlements or refugee camps in the areas around Syria (for example Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt) and have been vetted by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and through our own UK security services. They have also received medical screening including immunisation.

Security checks include the taking of biometrics which means that people's identity has been checked and individuals have also had their military history and political affiliation checked to identify issues of concern.

All documentation is checked, family histories are included along with school achievements, work history and details as to how they meet the criteria for resettlement in the UK.

The UNHCR and IOM have identified the families as meeting criteria for resettlement and they have been granted 5 years' full Humanitarian Protection. From July 2017, resettled refugees under the programme were able to change their status from Humanitarian Protection to full Refugee Status.

Having full leave to remain means the refugees are not asylum seekers or economic migrants but are people who have met the criteria to be given our protection and are entitled to permanent settlement in the UK.

Funding

The Home Office will be funding the resettlement schemes, there is no financial impact on Councils.

The Home Office will cover all costs during the first year, for example, for housing, education, health, English language tuition and integration support and there is also some provision for exceptional costs.

Discussions are ongoing with the Home Office to secure additional funding to cover any additional longer term costs where they are identified.

Further information about all the UK Government Resettlement Schemes can be found here

<https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/communities/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/refugees-and-unaccompanied-children>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-scheme-launched-to-resettle-children-at-risk>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/syrian-vulnerable-person-resettlement-programme-fact-sheet>

Why Wales?

The Welsh Government has responsibility towards international migrants living in Wales under its housing, health, education, social service functions and through its community cohesion agenda. As a result, the Welsh Government is a key player in relation to the inclusion of migrants in Welsh society.

There has been a lot of media interest in the Syrian conflict and our response, but Syrian and other refugees arriving in Wales have been through terrible experiences and may not want media attention. The most important thing is that Wales is offering a place of safety where they can start to rebuild their lives.

Syria- History and current context



(Wikipedia)

Once the centre of the Islamic Caliphate, Syria covers an area that has seen invasions and occupations over the ages, from Romans and Mongols to Crusaders and Turks.

A country of fertile plains, high mountains and deserts, it is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups, including Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, Christians, Druze, Alawite Shia and Arab Sunnis, the last of whom make up a majority of the Muslim population.

Modern Syria gained its independence from France in 1946, but has lived through periods of political instability driven by the conflicting interests of these various groups.

Since March 2011 political power, long held by a small mainly Alawite elite, has been contested in a bitter civil conflict initially sparked by the Arab Spring that turned into a complex war involving regional and international powers.

As a result, a number of self-proclaimed political entities have since emerged on Syria's territory, including the Syrian Interim Government, Rojava, and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Syria is the world's most violent country according to the Global Peace Index and is ranked last in the Global Peace Index.

Official languages	Arabic
<u>Ethnic groups</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syrian people • Arameans • Kurds • Turkomans • Assyrians • Armenians
Religion	87% Islam 10% Christianity 3% Druzism

(Wikipedia)

Demographics

Most people live in the Euphrates River valley and along the coastal plain, a fertile strip between the coastal mountains and the desert. Overall population density in Syria is about 99 per square kilometre (258 per square mile). According to the *World Refugee Survey 2008*, published by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Syria hosted a population of refugees and asylum seekers numbering approximately 1,852,300. The vast majority of this population was from Iraq (1,300,000), but sizeable populations from Palestine (543,400) and Somalia (5,200) also lived in the country.

In what the UN has described as "the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era" about 9.5 million Syrians, half the population, have been displaced since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in March 2011; 4 million are displaced outside the country.

Ethnic groups

Syrian Arabs, together with some 600,000 Palestinian Arabs, make up roughly 74% of the population of Syria.

The indigenous Christian Western Aramaic-speakers and Assyrians number around 400,000 people, with the Western Aramaic-speakers living all over the country, particularly in major urban centres, while the Assyrians mainly reside in the north and northeast (Homs, Aleppo, Qamishli, Hasakah). Western Aramaic is the foremost language in rural areas around these regions.

The second largest ethnic group in Syria are the Kurds. They constitute about 10% of the population, or approximately 1.6 million people (including 40,000 Yazidis). Most Kurds reside in the north eastern corner of Syria and most speak the Kurmanji variant of the Kurdish language.

The third largest ethnic group are the Turkish-speaking Syrian Turkmen/Turkoman, with estimates suggesting they constitute approximately 4–5% of the population of Syria.

Syria holds the 7th largest Armenian population in the world. They are mainly gathered in Aleppo, Qamishli, Damascus and Kesab.

Syria was once home to a substantial population of Jews, with large communities in Damascus, Aleppo, and Qamishli. Due to a combination of persecution in Syria and opportunities elsewhere, the Jews began to emigrate in the second half of the 19th century to Great Britain, the United States, and Israel. Today only a few Jews remain in Syria.

Religion

Sunni Muslims make up about 74% of Syria's population and Sunni Arabs account for 59–60% of the population, most Kurds (8.5%) and most Turkoman (3%) are also Sunni, while 13% of Syrians are Shia Muslims (particularly Alawite, Twelvers, and Ismailis but also Arabs, Kurds and Turkoman).

10% are Christian (the majority Antiochian Orthodox, the rest including Greek Catholic, Assyrian Church of the East, Armenian Orthodox, Protestants and other denominations), and 3% Druze. Druze number

around 500,000, and concentrate mainly in the southern area of Jabal al-Druze.

President Bashar al-Assad's family is Alawite and Alawites dominate the government of Syria and hold key military positions. In May 2013, SOHR stated that out of 94,000 killed during the Syrian Civil War, and at least 41,000 were Alawites.

Christians (2.5 million), a sizable number of whom are found among Syria's population of Palestinian refugees, are divided into several groups.

Languages

Arabic is the official language. Several modern Arabic dialects are used in everyday life, most notably Levantine in the west and Mesopotamian in the northeast.

Kurdish (in its Kurmanji form) is widely spoken in the Kurdish regions of Syria.

Armenian and Turkish (South Azeri dialect) are spoken among the Armenian and Turkmen minorities.

Aramaic was the lingua franca of the region before the advent of Arabic, and is still spoken among Assyrians, and Classical Syriac is still used as the liturgical language of various Syriac Christian denominations.

Most remarkably, Western Neo-Aramaic is still spoken in the village of Ma'loula as well as two neighbouring villages, 56 km (35 mi) northeast of Damascus.

English and French are widely spoken as a second language, but English is more often used.