



### Helping Ukraine

The official guidance about welcoming Ukrainian refugees to the UK is changing day by day.

At the time of writing, both the government and Buckinghamshire Council are compiling lists of offers of accommodation offered for at least six months. WRP will swing into action with the Council as soon as any Ukrainians arrive in the High Wycombe area.

The government is dealing first with family reunion applications, before spelling out how other Ukrainian refugees can come to the country. However, there are a few groups which are putting potential hosts and guests in touch with each other—one is Positive Action in Housing. Refugees at Home and Sanctuary Hosting also continue to match hosts and guests from many countries.

- Positive Action in Housing:** [www.paih.org](http://www.paih.org)
- Refugees at Home:** [www.refugeesathome.org](http://www.refugeesathome.org)
- Sanctuary Hosting:** [www.sanctuaryhosting.org](http://www.sanctuaryhosting.org)

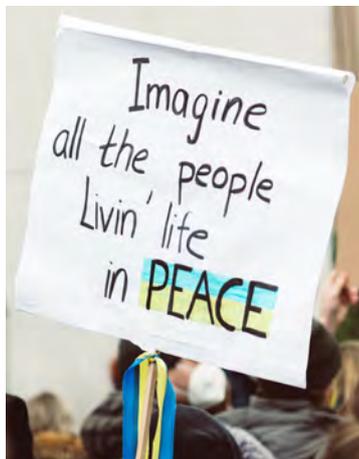


Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

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### Helping refugees and asylum-seekers from elsewhere

We are already, of course, supporting refugees and asylum-seekers from many other countries. Over the last six years, these have included Syria, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Albania, Turkey and the West Indies.



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## New refugee families

During the pandemic, very few asylum-seekers have been able to travel to the UK and the Home Office has been extremely slow in processing claims from those who are already here. Latterly, this has been exacerbated by the extra caseloads arising from the arrival of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. However, we now have two new refugee families and two new asylum-seeking families under our wing in High Wycombe. For safeguarding reasons, we don't mention names and are deliberately vague about details.

### Afghan family

The first is the family of Afghan relocatees who stayed in Mellor House briefly in the autumn, before having to go back to the hotel provided by the Home Office to be processed. Months later, they are finally back in High Wycombe, with support from both Buckinghamshire Council and Wycombe Refugee Partnership.

### Sudanese couple

We are also welcoming a Sudanese refugee couple from Darfur. They are staying in Mellor House for two or three months with our usual wrap-around package of support. We shall help him to find work and her to access English lessons and then look for affordable long-term accommodation for them.

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## The situation in Sudan

Our Administrator, Veronika, has just spent a fortnight in Sudan. We asked her to give us a glimpse of the situation in the country.

This was my second visit to Sudan and the main difference travelling there this time is that the country stands 'at the edge of an abyss', after the former president and dictator Omar al-Bashir was deposed in December 2019 by the military. Following another military coup in October last year, the tensions between the military and civilians are becoming more and more visible. The planned Sudanese transition to democracy is facing challenges and is moving day by day from its original mission.



*Helping to make our families feel at home*

**“...tensions between the military and civilians are becoming more and more visible.”**

*Graffiti in Sudan. The Arabic text on the left of the picture calls for 'Freedom, Peace, Equality'.*

How do the Sudanese continue living their lives in a country without a government and parliament? In comparison to my first visit in 2017, when I had the chance to travel around and see some of the country's historical places such as the pyramids, this time, owing to the political tension, my movement was more or less minimised to spending time at home with my family-in-law. Protests and larger demonstrations are happening once or twice a week and, on these days, the country is at a standstill. Interestingly, these protests, mainly organised and led by the youth, are well-planned months ahead. What caught my attention were the thousands of inscriptions and graffiti on buildings all over the capital city and its suburbs, containing slogans such as 'Freedom', 'End to military regime', 'Democracy', etc. Some paintings carry their meaning without the need of words.

Despite the unfavourable situation the country is facing, Sudan continues to play a significant role in accepting refugees from the neighbouring countries, in particular from Eritrea. Sudan was one of the few African countries who accepted Syrian refugees back in 2015 and granted them citizenship.

## New asylum-seeking families

We are also giving support to two new asylum-seeking families, one from Iran and one from Turkey.

These families come under our Community Response initiative. Among other things, we provide them with a modest amount in supermarket vouchers: £25 per person per month, to top up their allowance from the Home Office. We have received very good news that Buckinghamshire Council will be giving us a sizable grant to cover most of the cost of this operation for the next year. We are also very grateful to the people who are sponsoring the vouchers for individuals @ £25 or £50 per month.

## Access to activities for children

The Council is also giving us a generous grant towards a fund which we have set up primarily to enable asylum-seeking children to access sports and leisure activities which they could not otherwise afford. We have children doing judo, tae kwondo, swimming, football and skateboarding (thanks to Wycombe Wanderers). We are seeing already how successful these activities are in helping them to integrate and make friends.



### Can you help us?

We need volunteers to help with the following:

#### Drivers

There are rarely direct bus services from where the children live to where the activities take place. We have set up a rota of volunteers willing to give them lifts, but we need more drivers. Could you possibly help? We are happy to reimburse the cost of fuel. To volunteer, please email Veronika on [administrator@wycombe-refugees.org](mailto:administrator@wycombe-refugees.org).

#### Work and Welfare

At the moment, our volunteer Neil is a team of one offering support to refugees looking for jobs or applying for Universal Credit or Council tax discounts. We need volunteers with experience in the areas of job-seeking or benefits to join the team. You would normally be asked to take on only one client at a time. If you are interested in finding out more, please email [volunteering@wycombe-refugees.org](mailto:volunteering@wycombe-refugees.org)

#### Setting up

#### bank accounts

We need a confident advocate to accompany asylum-seekers to a bank to help them set up an account. Contact [volunteering@wycombe-refugees.org](mailto:volunteering@wycombe-refugees.org).

### Contact us

 [www.wycombe-refugees.org](http://www.wycombe-refugees.org)

 0845 643 2873

 [contactus@wycombe-refugees.org](mailto:contactus@wycombe-refugees.org)  Refugees Welcome in Wycombe

