

A Wicklow Welcome



The Al Sulaiman Family and Wicklow Community Sponsorship Group

Bringing a Refugee Family to an Irish Community

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This report is dedicated to the memory of Dermot Costello (1968 – 2018) who was the inspiration and the driving force behind this project.

Preface

On 24th April 2018, the Al-Sulaiman family from Homs in Syria moved from a refugee camp in the Lebanon to a fully furnished rental home in Wicklow as a newly arrived family with a legal entitlement to the benefits of Irish citizenship and the associated rights and responsibilities.

They were warmly welcomed by the Wicklow Syria Appeal and the wider community of the town of Wicklow.

Members of Wicklow Town community had worked on a voluntary basis for over a year to bring a Syrian family who had lost their home as a result of the war in that country to a new life and home in Wicklow.

This document outlines how that happened.

Introduction

In 2003, Ireland hosted the Special Olympics. Competing national teams were allocated to different areas in Ireland. The Syrian team was allocated to Wicklow Town. Dermot Costello (DC) volunteered to help and was soon chair of the organising committee of Wicklow Special Olympics host committee for the Syrian team and supporters. The event was a great success in international, national and local terms. Dermot tried to keep in contact with members of the Syrian team in subsequent years.

However, he was unable to keep in contact with the team members when the war in Syria started. He began wondering what he could do to assist those affected by the war in Syria. The Irish government announcement of September 2015 that Ireland would accept 4,000 refugees from Syria (see Appendix 1) gave him the focus for a campaign: ***Wicklow Welcomes Syrian families.***

His plan was to prepare the local community to welcome some of the Syrian refugees whom the Irish Government intended to bring to Ireland. Initially, the move was towards fund-raising and awareness-raising in the local community.

In January of 2016, DC organised a meeting of about 25 people in Wicklow County Council offices. The group called itself the **Wicklow Syria Appeal (WSA)** and dedicated itself to his plan.

The group decided initially to fund-raise through the local 2nd level schools and in tandem with that to try to increase the community's awareness of the situation in Syria, of the proposed government programme to bring 4,000 refugees to Ireland and also how Wicklow could help. In order to have up-to-date and current news from Syria, they decided to get professional assistance from GOAL, a charity working with refugees in Syria. The GOAL education officer was based in Wicklow.

During the summer of 2016, the group started working with GOAL and together prepared a campaign for the 2nd level schools in the town for the 2016/17 academic year.

On 1st October, they issued a formal Press Release and started working with three second level schools in Wicklow town, East Glendalough School, the Dominican College and Coláiste Cill Mhantáin.

The schools ran fund-raising events such as "No Uniform Days". WSA volunteers organised an inter-schools debate about Direct Provision. Volunteers commented on the high level of political awareness of the competitors and were very encouraged by the students' work and response. One school incorporated the project into their Young Social Innovators programme. This led to their writing a "Song for Syria", performing it with other fund-raising activities and participating in the Young Social Innovators Speak Out.

The schools programmes ran throughout that academic year and were very successful in the twin aims of fund-raising and awareness-raising. However, during that academic year, it became apparent that the Irish government did not intend to assign a Syrian family to Wicklow, at least not in the near future.

In the light of this, WSA decided to try to bring a family to Wicklow themselves and have the project organised through the local community.

The following pages outline the various stages in the process of bringing a refugee family to Wicklow.

This is a summary document which attempts to outline the experience of one community working with one refugee family. It cannot therefore be considered as a proscriptive document; communities differ, families differ, so what another community experiences may well be different to what is described below.

The appendices at the end of the document give further details about certain aspects of the process and include a summary financial statement.

Step 1 in bringing a family to Wicklow:

Establishing a working committee

The first step in a project like this is to establish a committee which will manage the project. This means bringing together a group of like-minded volunteers who will:

- *share the common goal of bringing a family to Wicklow;*
- *represent varied sections of the local community;*
- *have various skill sets required.*

As outlined briefly in the introduction overleaf, a group of people called the **Wicklow Syria Appeal (WSA)** had been set up in Wicklow by Dermot Costello (DC).

In setting up the group, DC was conscious at all times of the need:

1. for representation and support from as many sections of the local community as possible
2. for the particular skills which the group would need if it was to be successful.

Every member of the group knew DC and what he was capable of; he was the common factor in bringing the group together. In gathering the initial group of volunteers, DC had ensured that key skills were covered and that as many sections of the local community as possible were involved. He was widely known and respected, with interests and influence in many different social networks.

The volunteers included:

- Representatives from different sports clubs
- Representatives from Church communities
- People with organising ability, with financial ability, with PR / Marketing skills, with IT skills, with building skills, with local property experience.
- People who were strongly connected to different sections of the local community, including education, medical, commercial, public services, the Gardaí.

In terms of the actual task and volunteer commitment, the website

<http://www.sponsorrefugees.org/> (Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees) gives a good summary of what it takes to bring a refugee family to join a local community, see Appendix 5.

Step 2

Agreement of Objectives

The agreed objectives were:

- To identify one Syrian family who had lost their home and income due the war in Syria
- To welcome them to a new home in Wicklow
- To ensure that they settled comfortably and integrated into their new community and home

Some of the questions which the group asked themselves were:

- a) How do we find the family?
- b) How do we know that they are genuine refugees?
- c) What rights will they have in Ireland?
- d) How will they travel to Ireland?
- e) How do they fit into the local community?
- f) What will they need when they come to Wicklow?

Over the winter of 2016/17, DC researched the topic of bringing a Syrian family to a community in Ireland. Early in 2017, his research brought him to Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre (Appendix 14). Through the Safe Passage Family Reunification Programme (SPFRP - Appendix 1), Nasc could provide a formal pathway to bring a refugee family to Ireland. Nasc could also provide a bank account for continued and more elaborate fund-raising by WSA. DC presented his ideas to Nasc and the two bodies (WSA and Nasc) agreed to work together. To facilitate this, they both signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 6) in the summer of 2017 and WSA completed a resettlement plan to identify and outline the suite of supports that would be required to support a family. It is important to establish very clearly with Nasc exactly what are the respective roles of the local group and Nasc and exactly what supports Nasc can provide to the group. Nasc is not a state body and has limited resources. It is also important to be clear about who controls media releases. Local communities may wish to ensure that they have this control. In addition, Nasc and the local communities need to be clear about the timelines concerned, eg how long will the various responsibilities and supports last, both before and after the family's arrival. To undertake to settle a refugee family into a community is a significant commitment and places a great responsibility on those involved. Considerable amounts of time and energy will be required both pre- and post-arrival.

Nasc identified a family from Syria who had been welcomed into Cork under the Government Resettlement Programme and who had immediate family members currently living in a refugee camp in the Lebanon. To be successful under the Government Resettlement Programme, the local family has to show that they can support & house the incoming family members. The Syrian family in Cork could not do this, so WSA became the

official sponsor for the target family under the Nasc #SafePassage Campaign. Nasc would become the official link between WSA and the target family.

As one element of support, Nasc facilitated an introduction and training day for WSA volunteers in February 2017. This day presented to the WSA volunteers the background to the Family Reunification Scheme, the work of Nasc and then gave a full update on the family concerned, Appendix 14 for full agenda.

Nasc also undertook to produce a video detailing the project.

Working with Nasc through a government sponsored scheme ensured that WSA had the following supports:

- The backing of a publicly recognised agency; this in turn gave increased legitimacy and authority to WSA. It gave WSA access to other public agencies working in this area. It also ensured a level of external control over WSA finances.
- Financial support: WSA & Nasc approached Irish Red Cross to support with travel assistance for the family to secure flights, cost of flights and travel documents. Irish Red Cross secured this funding under its current Migration Programme. The family's travel costs to Ireland of approximately €5,000 were covered by The Irish Red Cross. €5,000 towards the cost of the house repairs, see Step 3.2 and Appendix 7, were also covered by the Irish Red Cross.
- A framework which would ensure that the refugee family would be entitled to the same benefits as Irish citizens on arrival in Ireland. This in turn would ensure state supports for the family once the various processes were correctly followed.

Since WSA initiated its campaign, there have been changes in the approach of the Irish Government to the issue of refugees. The government now actively supports community sponsorship. This means that advice and support is more available to community groups wishing to assist a refugee family in this manner. WSA welcomes this development. Further information can be found on Nasc's website at:

<https://www.nascireland.org/current-projects/community-sponsorship>

Step 3

Clarification of the process required & subsequent actions

To achieve the overall objective, three areas of work were identified and responsibility for each area assigned to individual working group members:

1. Fundraising and community awareness & support
2. Identifying and preparing accommodation
3. Settling the family and Integrating them into the local community

In January 2018, the group was formally subdivided into sub-committees. The overall organising committee was made up of the Chair, the Project Manager, the Financial Controller, PR person and Secretary. The various sub-committees were: 1. Finance; 2. PR & Communications; 3. Fund Raising; 4. House; and 5. Integration and Education.

Internal Group Communication:

The main group communicated in four key ways:

1. A WhatsApp group was established for general communication. All the volunteers involved were attached to this group and were able to keep updated.
2. The group met for one hour on a weekday evening on a weekly basis. The venue was provided free by a local primary school and the meetings were kept as brief and to-the-point as possible.
3. Meeting agenda and minutes were circulated by email.
4. A Project Plan was created on a shared Google drive. This included targets, and financial and administrative details, with named volunteers noted against specific tasks. The Project Plan thus ensured that WSA members were able to complement each other and not overlap in their contributions.

External Communication:

1. The WSA website - <http://wicklowsyriaappeal.com/> - was created and maintained as an information source and a reference point. It was important that the website was in place before the Fundraising and Awareness campaign formally began. As WSA was a volunteer group, having a website demonstrated their intent and listed those involved in the group for the wider community to see. This helped build credibility for the project with local groups. WSA also had an email address to enable contact in confidence.
2. A Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/wicklowsyriaappeal/> - and a Twitter feed - [@WWSyriaAppeal](https://twitter.com/WWSyriaAppeal) - were created and maintained. There were 3 administrators for the social media site and 1 person writing the posts. Initially Social Posts were about the group and its objectives, sharing the fundraising activities and later moving to let the community know about the family arriving, build empathy for their struggle to rebuild their lives and share a few pictures of them prior to arrival to help the

community build a connection with the family prior to meeting them. Other community sites shared our posts to show their support and help us reach a wider audience.

3. A short Information Leaflet was printed and distributed at any fund-raising or other WSA events, Appendix 3.
4. Local media – print and radio - were updated regularly with news reports. A local journalist took a great interest in the story and gave WSA regular features and support for fundraising activities where possible. This was vital in presenting community sponsorship as a positive local initiative. See Appendix 13.
5. In November 2017, a public meeting was held in the town, as many of the local community were already aware of Wicklow Syria Appeal. Nasc and WSA outlined the aims of the project and encouraged more volunteers to get involved. There was no negativity from the people attending the meeting, although some concerns were expressed, as was expected. This meeting was particularly useful in recruiting new members for the group.
6. A National newspaper gave significant coverage of the project with several feature articles. The journalist involved took a great interest in the project and continues to be very supportive. See: <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/from-syria-to-wicklow-a-desperate-family-an-irish-welcome-1.3537684>
7. Local Authority & County Councillors were kept informed
8. Various other steps were taken to further awareness of the project, see section Fundraising and Awareness

Due to the housing crisis, WSA was aware that the family moving into a house in the town would be contentious. As a result, the decision was taken not to share any details of the house in the media. This story was not about a house and WSA did not want social commentary to be directed in this way. This story was about a community supporting a refugee family to integrate and begin a new life and this was the focus of all the posts.

By the time the Al Sulaimans arrived, most people in the town had been aware of the project for a year to 6 months; most of the concerns had been addressed and Wicklow knew who the Al Sulaimans were. The friendly smiles and greetings they received around the town in the first months were heart-warming.

Social Media – Dealing with negativity

- Overall Social Media was extremely useful for the project in order to build awareness and support.
- Social Media also enabled WSA to thank all the various groups that fundraised for WSA publicly.

- Social Media was a great way to connect with skilled volunteers, and to gauge what the concerns of the community were so we could address them
- WSA deliberately did not include any specifics on the family's house on Social Media or in the Press in order to preserve their privacy and to avoid an upswell against this contentious subject. WSA simply assured the community that the house was not a social/council house and that the family were not jumping any queues.
- 90% of comments on posts were positive.
- Any racist or extremist comments were hidden (deleting them only encourages them further!)
- Any concerns were addressed directly without identifying specific people in the group or the location of the house.
- Those who asked why WSA did not "help our own", were assured that WSA members did help through other charities. These people were encouraged to set up a community group to help others themselves, a group which WSA would in turn support.
- Any groups working in this area are most likely to encounter negative & disparaging comments at some point. It's important not to let these keyboard warriors affect our work or to take seriously any of their threats.

Step 3.1 Fundraising and community awareness & support

Some of the questions which the group asked themselves were:

- a) Who pays for all this?
- b) How much will it all cost?
- c) What will the family live on?

The two elements - Fundraising and Awareness - were considered equally important. In every fundraising activity, the possibilities of spreading awareness of the project in the community and getting support for the project from the community were seen as complementary to the fundraising.

WSA were very aware of the need to engage early with the local community to gradually build their confidence in the project, gain support and bring the community with them along this journey.

The group identified the young people of the town as those with the most open minds and decided to connect with them first with the aim of leveraging their support to educate their families. Through working with schools on educational and fundraising initiatives, awareness of WSA spread. All fundraising activities had a dual role of fundraising and informing the town about WSA and its aims, and later about the arrival of the family. By engaging with as many groups as possible, Choirs, Schools, Sports Clubs, Churches, Business Groups, Active Retirement groups and getting them involved in the fundraising, it helped to build community ownership and conversation around the project.

A “talk track” (a short outline of what WSA was about, Appendix 4) was created for volunteers to use when approaching businesses or others in the community looking for support or spreading awareness.

Local Businesses:

To approach local businesses, a template letter was written outlining the project & requesting support, see Appendix 2. Businesses which had helped were sent an individually drafted letter of thanks and also offered recognition on the WSA web-site.

A target list of possible donors was drawn up on the shared drive, with all group members encouraged to add to the list and also to take responsibility for contacting a selection of the businesses. To ensure that businesses were not approached by more than one volunteer, volunteers noted on the shared drive which businesses they were taking responsibility for.

Presentations were made to the local Rotary Club and Lions Club.

Sports Clubs:

A theme to assist in fundraising in Sports Clubs was suggested. The theme was "*Sport for Syria*". Sports Clubs were invited to ask their members to get sponsorship for joining the "*Sport for Syria*". As the club members walked or ran certain distances (often laps around their pitches) those distances were deducted from the total number of kilometres from Wicklow to Homs. Thus a link to Syria was created, clubs could claim their distances run and in fundraising the general awareness of the project was enhanced. A WSA volunteer designed posters and a local printer printed them to publicise WSA and the events outside the clubs.

WSA Bank Account:

It is difficult to fund-raise appropriately without a bank account. Nasc agreed to open a bank account in the name of WSA so that there was proper control of funds and so that online donations were made possible. A link was created from the WSA website so that donations could be made online. This ensured another level of external control of WSA finances and also gave a level of transparency to our fund-raising.

Church Gate Collection:

Church leaders from the main churches represented in the community had been approached at the very start of the campaign. They agreed to organise church gate collections within their communities. Fortunately however, other fund-raising had been so successful that this option was not pursued.

Gala Concert:

A local choir master organised a Gala Concert involving several local and school choirs. This was a wonderful occasion where there was a palpable sense of community support in a fund-raising exercise.

Step 3.2 Identifying and preparing accommodation

Housing is a sensitive issue. There are thousands of people on housing lists waiting for housing in Ireland. There are people living on the streets without a home at all. It was important to show that any “new” family was not taking a home from someone already waiting for one in Ireland. In addition, any proposed accommodation has to suit the needs of the family, particularly in terms of size and location. (eg A house in a rural area for a family with no transport would not be suitable.)

Only 4 suitable houses were available to rent in August 2017.

A local auctioneer found another house whose owner was abroad, and which was in need of some renovation. After reviewing the house, WSA agreed with the owner that WSA would decorate and renovate the house in exchange for a “rent free” period. Subsequently HAP (House Assistance Programme) would become available with rental support for the family.

- A sub-committee of WSA volunteers worked for several months to bring the house up to the required standard.
- A structural engineer gave advice on a pro bono basis about what work was required
- A builder gave a considerable amount of his time, skills and materials pro bono to assist with this work.
- Local shops and businesses, when approached directly by WSA volunteers, offered free credit and/or materials. This, in turn, encouraged the volunteers in their work.
- Insurance was an issue as WSA had to be clear that the local volunteers were suitably covered. After some time, insurance was secured via a company that provides insurance for voluntary groups such as for example Tidy Towns volunteer groups, see contact details Appendix 14.
- To allow electricity supply to the house while WSA were repairing and decorating prior to the arrival of the tenants, one of the WSA members authorised the ESB to address the bill to her. These Bills were later reimbursed from WSA funds. Once the new tenant was set up on the ESB system, WSA discussed bill payment options with the tenant and they decided to opt for the pay as you go system. WSA called the ESB to arrange this with the tenant present so they could authorise WSA to speak on their behalf. The ESB Meter Box was installed within 10 days. The Pay as you go system also took some time to explain. There have been no issues with using it, the fact that credit and number of days that will last at normal usage is displayed on the box is very useful.
- See Appendix 7 for details of the House Improvements undertaken. Irish Red Cross was approached by Nasc to support with the housing upgrades and financial support of €5,000 was provided by the Irish Red Cross

Work on the house expanded community interest and strengthened group relationships. It also gave a concrete opportunity for local businesses to become involved. However, not all groups will have to work on house renovation as WSA did, particularly in view of the current governmental support of community sponsorship.

Step 3.3 Settling the family & Integrating them into the local community

Sample questions needing answers:

- a) How do they get from the Lebanon to Ireland?
- b) Will the family members speak English?
- c) Will the children be able to go to school?
- d) Will the parents be able to work?
- e) Will there be medical issues?
- f) How much time will all this take?

Prior to the arrival of the family, some preparation needed to be done on what the family would require in terms of being established in Ireland. WSA initiated contacts with statutory and non-governmental agencies to try to ensure that they could prepare for what would be required when the family arrived. Despite this, a lot of volunteer time was needed for many months after the family's arrival.

Initially, the family had no English at all, so a lot of support was required. On certain agreed key occasions, a professional interpreter was hired to ensure that full communication was facilitated. Some of the larger hospitals, eg in Dublin, were able to provide official translators. In addition, the family needed assistance in settling into the town. The family needed help in finding the local and also specialist shops, eg Halal meat and the closest mosque and arranging transport.

WSA volunteers spent a lot of time simply accompanying family members on shopping trips, medical trips and settling into school. A family having left home and lived in a refugee camp for some time is very likely to need much medical and dental attention.

There is an ethical obligation on a group of local people who bring a refugee family into their midst; the refugee family has to be supported until they can be said to have settled comfortably into their new surroundings. Support was available to the family for many months after their arrival and a considerable amount of volunteer time was needed. These months, perhaps over a year, were very labour intensive. This in turn meant that volunteers needed to be aware of the dangers of over-contributing and becoming fatigued. It is important therefore to have a bank of volunteers available. It is also important to bring in new volunteers with fresh energy and ideas. WSA volunteers were the primary people supporting the family.

On the other hand, such work is deeply rewarding and many volunteers feel that they have made new friends, and have benefitted greatly from the whole experience. See Appendix 12 for some sample WSA volunteer comments.

Finally, the support which WSA provided for the family is intended to ensure that the family settles successfully into life in Wicklow. It is important to balance the level of support with the need for the family to manage independently, and the ultimate aim of any support is that such support will at a certain point in time no longer be required.

Issues to be addressed before the family's arrival included:

	Task	Agency involved	What is required	Action
1	Arranging Travel Visas and documentation for the family	UNHCR, IOM, Dept of Justice, Irish Red Cross and Nasc	Medical check for all family members, UNHCR Refugee Status Letter, Dept of Justice Reunification letter, Red Cross Travel Document, Plane tickets.	Co-ordinated by Irish Red Cross & Nasc. The Irish Red Cross paid the cost of flights directly.
2	Garda Vetting for any volunteers who will be working with the family	Garda Vetting Bureau and Nasc	Online application form to be completed	Contact Nasc to initiate
3	Interpreter required for complicated medical or legal issues, or any sensitive issues.	Professional interpreters.	Identify professional independent interpreter prior to family arrival and agree terms. Funding.	Clarify availability and arrange meetings as required. It is important that the family felt comfortable with the interpreter.
4	Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP)	Offices of the Local Authority	Written application form; Sworn affidavit to state that the parents did not own any property in Syria; House inspection; PPS numbers; Rental lease.	Open communication with this office when preparing the house initially so that all requirements are clear to both parties.
5	Training in Cultural Awareness for Volunteers and also for Incoming Family Group	Nasc, UNHCR, Irish Red Cross	Contact with agencies	Liaise with relevant agency to ensure appropriate training.

Issues to be addressed after the family's arrival included the below, although several required preparation prior to the family's arrival:

	Task	Agency involved	What is required	Action
6	PPS Numbers for the family	Social Protection Offices	Travel documents, with Letter of Status from Dept of Justice. Family members need to travel and present themselves in person at the Social Protection Offices.	Set up a meeting as soon as family's travel arrangements are known. Volunteer needs to assist completion of paperwork on behalf of the family and take them to appointment.
7	GNIB cards	Relevant Garda station	UNHCR & Dept Justice letters. Presence of official sponsor is required also.	Contact Gardaí prior to arrival to arrange a meeting. Bring the family to the meeting
8	Medical Cards	Local Health Office	PPS numbers. Proof of address. Travel documentation. Evidence of Income (Social Welfare)	Volunteer needs to assist family members over 18 to set up email addresses and make the online application for the family & individual members > 16 years.
9	Bank Accounts	Commercial Bank	Dept of Justice letter, Nasc letter, PPS numbers, Evidence of address.	Contact the bank in advance and ask what documentation the Head of Compliance will require. This was a lengthy process.

	Task	Agency involved	What is required	Action
10	Medical and Dental Checks	Local GP & Dental Services	Family members to be on GP books & medical cards	Can be arranged prior to the family's arrival. Ongoing, this can be very labour intensive depending on family medical requirements.
11	Education & Language Support	Local Schools. Local Education Boards incl Adult Education Services. Local volunteers.	Contact with schools to clarify if places are available. Subsequently formal applications.	Engage with schools as soon as family is confirmed. Arrange English language support with volunteers & official agencies.
12	House Services: Electricity	ESB Networks	Proof of residence is required to register a new customer	WSA provided a letter from the Auctioneer confirming the new tenant was resident and Copy of Department of Social Welfare letter at same address.
13	Other House Services, eg Refuse Collection, TV	Local providers		
14	House Insurance & Lease	Estate Agent, solicitor, Landlord	House Rental Lease	Lease to be drawn up and agreed between landlord and renters and then signed.
15	Assisting with Socialising	Clubs, Summer Activity Schools etc	Try to get interest areas from family members and link to providers.	

See Appendix 10 for a list of all the documentation which was received by or on behalf of the family.

Step 4

Evaluating the project

The project evaluation is carried out in several ways:

- Ongoing assessment and review at regular WSA meetings
- Ongoing contact with the family
- A formal review of the process by the family, co-ordinated through a professional translator, see Appendix 11
- A final review at a future date once WSA agrees that the family has transitioned from total dependence to a good level of independence and is reasonably settled in the community

As always, good communication is a key component of the work. Clear communication & agreed targets between group members, between a group and other agencies and between a group and the family. This will help to avoid misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations which can have quite a negative impact.

After approximately one year in Ireland, the family is becoming more independent, although support is still required. English language learning continues to be a priority, as do health concerns. WSA as a support group has evolved over the time period of its existence and membership has reflected this evolution.

WSA now simply refers to itself as “The Group”, the name by which the family know us and the adult members of the family are being invited to “The Group” meetings. These meetings, which started at once weekly over 2 years ago, now take place once every 4 to 6 weeks. Most of “The Group” members now see the family as personal friends.

Appendices

- Appendix 1** *Irish Government Humanitarian Admission Programmes*
- Appendix 2** *Template Letter to Local Business*
- Appendix 3** *Information Leaflet*
- Appendix 4** *“Talk Track”*
- Appendix 5** *Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees: 10 steps to sponsoring a refugee family*
- Appendix 6** *Memorandum of Understanding between WSA and Nasc*
- Appendix 7** *Work completed on house renovation*
- Appendix 8** *WSA contact details*
- Appendix 9** *Financial Statement*
- Appendix 10:** *Documentation which was received by or on behalf of the family.*
- Appendix 11:** *Family review of their experience in coming to Ireland.*
- Appendix 12:** *Sample local media coverage*
- Appendix 13:** *Agenda for Nasc Training Day*
- Appendix 14:** *External Bodies and their Contact Details*
- Appendix 15:** *Sample posters used for publicity*
- Appendix 16:** *Sample comments from WSA volunteers on their experience with the project.*

Appendix 1:

Irish Government Humanitarian Admission Programmes

On 12 March 2014, the Irish Government introduced the "Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme" (SHAP). SHAP was to focus on offering temporary Irish residence to vulnerable persons present in Syria, or who have fled from Syria to surrounding countries since the outbreak of the conflict in March 2011, and who have close family members residing in the State. This scheme closed in 2014.

In September of 2015, the Irish government announced that Ireland would take 4,000 refugees from the war in Syria under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. It was intended that the 4,000 refugees would arrive by the end of 2017.

Under the ***Resettlement Programme***, people arriving in Ireland will already have been selected under the UNHCR resettlement programme and granted refugee status.

Under the ***Relocation Programme***, people will arrive in Ireland from other EU member states before their status is determined, i.e. it will be up to the Irish authorities (i.e. D/Justice authorities) to process their claims for international protection (asylum).

On 14 November 2017, the Irish Government announced that The ***Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission Programme*** will address the issue of family reunification for some immediate family members who are coming from UNHCR-established conflict zones and are outside the scope of the International Protection Act 2015. The 2015 Act provides for the family reunification of immediate family members (spouse, civil partner and minor children) in line with the permissions operated by other EU Member States under the EU Family Reunification Directive (in which Ireland does not participate).

The ***Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission Programme*** was amended in May 2018 to become the ***Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) Humanitarian Admission Programme 2, or "IHAP"***.

The Irish Government now actively supports community sponsorship of refugee families. The details of the programme can be found on Nascireland.org along with all the supporting documents: <https://www.nascireland.org/current-projects/community-sponsorship>

Appendix 2: Template letter to Local Businesses



facebook.com/wicklowsyriaappeal



[@WWsyriaappeal](https://twitter.com/WWsyriaappeal)



info@wicklowsyriaappeal.com

www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com

Date 2017

Dear

We are writing to you as a member of the Wicklow Community and local business owner to inform you about our local community group, Wicklow Syria Appeal, and our plans for the next year.

Wicklow Syria Appeal is made up of a group of volunteers across the Wicklow business, education and religious communities. We formed in 2016 to support those affected by conflict in Syria, in honour of the 2003 Syrian Special Olympics teams twinning with Wicklow Town. The volunteer group came together to enable the Wicklow Community to make a positive difference to the lives of those affected by war in Syria through community action, education and fundraising.

Throughout 2016 & 2017 Wicklow Syria Appeal ran education programmes in local schools, supported Transition Year projects and fundraised to support NGO organisations working in Syria.

Later in 2017 we decided to focus on what we, the Wicklow community, could do to help the Syrian refugees coming to Ireland. To enable us to do this, Wicklow Syria Appeal partnered with Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre to develop and pilot a community sponsorship scheme to support and reunite Syrian families who have been separated by the war in Syria. This project is supported United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Ireland.

Wicklow Syria Appeal have now taken the step to become a Nasc community project, and sponsor a Syrian Family to join family members already living in Ireland. We are working towards finding housing for the family and providing them with a support network to integrate fully into the Wicklow Community. As always, these projects require funding and we have many fundraising activities including a Gala Concert and a Sport for Syria campaign. We are also appealing to you as a local **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX** to support our plans to help this Syrian family with a donation. Donations of over €250 enable our Charity Partners Nasc to also claim tax relief on the donation of 31%, increasing a €250 Donation by €112 to total a benefit of €362 to the Charity. We would appreciate any donation you can manage at this time.

All donations go directly to Nasc who are a registered charity and are fully compliant with the Governance Code and the Charities Regulatory Authority. You can find all details of how to donate on the attached form.

As a community, we hope that Wicklow can make a real difference to the lives of this Syrian Family through supporting them to start a new life here, as part of our community.

Many thanks for giving our request your consideration,

On Behalf of Wicklow Syria Appeal

Wicklow Syria Appeal Volunteers Include:

(List of names of WSA members was noted here)



How to Donate

All Donations are made directly to Nasc, Registered charity number CHY13752

Donations of €250 are eligible for tax relief at 31%, paid to our Charity Partners Nasc.

1. Lodge or Transfer Online Directly to Nasc bank account for Wicklow Syria Appeal, a Nasc Community Project:

Nasc Irish Immigrant Support Centre
IBAN: IE66 AIBK 9341 9421 5876 35
BIC: AIBKIE2D

Please reference your lodgement: WSA

2. Paypal - use the Donate button on our website at www.wicklowsyriapeal.com

3. Cheques can be made payable to Nasc Irish Immigrant Support Centre.

Please post cheques to
Finance Officer
Nasc the Irish Immigrant Support Centre
Ferry Lane
Cork

Please reference the cheque donation is for WSA in the note you send with the cheque, or return it with this form.

Appendix 3:

WSA Information Flier: (Printed here at A4 size, but was distributed at A5 size)



ABOUT WICKLOW SYRIA APPEAL

Wicklow Syria Appeal are a volunteer group set up to support those affected by conflict in Syria. Wicklow Town was twinned with Syria in 2003 for the Special Olympics, the connection with Syria grew from there. In 2016 Dermot Costello, who had been Chair of the Wicklow Special Olympics committee in 2003, founded Wicklow Syria Appeal. We are a group of volunteers across the Wicklow business, education and religious communities who came together to enable the Wicklow Community to make a positive difference to the lives of those affected by war in Syria through community action, education and fundraising.

WHAT DO WICKLOW SYRIA APPEAL DO?

Throughout 2016 and 2017 Wicklow Syria Appeal ran education programmes in local schools, supported Transition Year projects and fundraised to support NGO organisations working in Syria. Now Wicklow Syria Appeal Volunteers have decided to focus on what we, the Wicklow community, could do to help the Syrian refugees coming to Ireland. As we are volunteers we have partnered with Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre, to develop an exciting and unique community project to bring a Syrian Refugee Family to live in Wicklow in 2018.

WHAT IS THE WICKLOW SYRIA APPEAL COMMUNITY PROJECT?

Wicklow Syria Appeal plans to bring a Syrian Refugee family to live in Wicklow Town under the Refugee Family Reunification Programme. We have secured a house for the family and are working with Nasc to organise their safe passage to Ireland. We plan to support the family to integrate and rebuild their lives as part of the Wicklow Community. If you would like further information or to help in any way please contact us!

www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com

info@wicklowsyriaappeal.com

Appendix 4: "Talk Track"



This is a few paragraphs to help the group explain what Wicklow Syria Appeal are and what we aim to do!

I am volunteering with Wicklow Syria Appeal. We are a group of volunteers from the Wicklow community who want to help those affected by war in Syria. Do you remember that Wicklow were twinned with Syria for the Special Olympics in 2003?

Last year we ran education programmes in local schools, and fundraised to support NGO organisations working in Syria. This year we are focusing on what we can do as a community to help Syrian refugees coming to Ireland. As we are a volunteer group we need to work with an organisation experienced in helping immigrants and a registered charity to manage our fundraising proceeds. We have partnered with the Irish Immigrant support council Nasc, they are helping us to reunite a Syrian family with their relatives already living in Ireland.

As a community, we hope that the people of Wicklow can make a real difference to the lives of a Syrian Family through supporting them to start a new life here, as part of our Wicklow community.

To do this we are running fundraising projects and developing a network of people throughout the Wicklow community to can help the family to integrate into life in the town.

Updated October 2017

Appendix 5: Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees: 10 steps to sponsoring a refugee family

The website <http://www.sponsorrefugees.org/> (Citizens UK Foundation for Community Sponsorship of Refugees) gives a good summary of what it takes to bring a refugee family to join a community. They outline 10 steps to sponsoring a refugee family:

1. You are deeply committed to welcoming a refugee family into your neighbourhood and supporting them to build a new life.
2. You are an organised group with a strong sense of purpose and shared motivation.
3. You can all make a time commitment of several hours a week over an 18 month period.
4. You can find a home of their own in your community for a refugee family that is affordable and in good condition.
5. You are prepared to become a registered charity or form a partnership with an existing registered charity.
6. You have or can raise a significant amount of money. Final amount will depend on what is required eg property renovation etc. In case of WSA, the final amount required was approximately €34,000 with €20,000 of that required for property renovation, see Financial Statement Appendix 9.
7. Within your group, or in partnering with other local bodies, you can provide the support that a refugee family needs. (Interpreting, Teaching English, Registering for Services, Help finding a job/education, Working with vulnerable people.)
8. You are supported by your local authority.
9. You can satisfy the Irish Govt that you are a responsible group with sound plans to welcome and support a refugee family in your community. (Budget, Resettlement Plan, Safeguarding Policy.)
10. You are looking forward to the day when you can go to the Airport to welcome the family whose lives you will transform.
11. **You are aware that this day is only the beginning of the next stage of the project and intensive family support will be needed for the first 6 to 8 months at least.**

Appendix 6: MoU between WSA and Nasc

Memorandum of Understanding

Nasc, Ireland the Wicklow Syrian Appeal

This MoU is an Agreement made between the following parties:

BETWEEN

- (1) **Nasc the Irish Immigrant Support Centre (Nasc)** a company limited by guarantee registered in Ireland with registration number 335227 whose registered office is at Ferry Lane, Cork ["Nasc"]. Nasc is a registered charity – CHY 13752 and
- (2) **Wicklow Syria Appeal, (WSA) Community Group** at 70 Marlton Demesne, Wicklow
(each a "Party" and together the "Parties")

Commencement Date: 07 Day of December 2017 for a term of 1 year. This agreement can be extended beyond the termination by mutual agreement of both parties.

BACKGROUND:

Nasc and WSA have joined developed a community sponsorship project to sponsor and support a refugee family to come to Wicklow Town. The family have been identified by Nasc and will arrive in Ireland under Ireland's Family Reunification Laws and policies. WSA will deliver a range of community supports including accommodation to support the family settle into life in Wicklow.

1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:

1.1 This Agreement constitutes a Memorandum of Understanding between Nasc, and Wicklow Syrian Appeal for a Community Sponsorship Project in Wicklow where members of the local community will come together to sponsor a Syrian family to come and live in Wicklow Town.

BOTH PARTIES ARE COMMITTED TO:

1.2 Operating to the highest professional standards guided by the values of collaboration, transparency, mutual responsibility and respect and a dedication to achieve the best possible outcomes for the family.

1.3 This Agreement outlines the parameters of the partnership:

- I. To set out the working arrangement between Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre and the Wicklow Syria Appeal in the design and implementation of a Community Sponsorship Project entitled Wicklow Community Sponsorship Project.
- II. The primary objective of this project is to support an Identified Syrian Family to move to Wicklow Town through a Nasc Community Sponsorship Project.
- III. The family will be supported by members of the general community, through the Wicklow Syria Appeal Community Group [hereafter referred to as WSA], to move to and fully settle in life in Wicklow town.

- i. Nasc will support the community in its efforts to provide for and integrate the family to life in their town.
- ii. The WSA group will be governed by a steering group and Mr. Dermot Costello & Mr. Mick Nolan are Co-Chairs of this group.
- iii. The main contact point and project coordinators in Nasc are Fiona Finn and Fiona Hurley who report directly to the Nasc Board of Trustees and have designated authority from the Trustees to deliver this project in partnership with WSA.

2. COMMITMENTS OF PARTIES

2.1 NASC COMMITS TO:

- 2.1.1 Have full oversight of this project to include the following:
- 2.1.2 Lead on all communications and media relating to the Community Sponsorship Project.
- 2.1.3 Identify a suitable family and liaise with family members prior to their arrival.
- 2.1.4 Work with the relevant authorities to attain the requisite entry visas to ensure legal entry the state.
- 2.1.5 Work with and support WSA to ensure the needs of the family are met.
- 2.1.6 This work is a Nasc project that will be delivered in partnership with Wicklow Syria Appeal.
- 2.1.7 Nasc will work directly with the Steering Committee who are representative of the wider community.
- 2.1.8 Nasc will manage and administer any funds relating to this specific project in line with Nasc Financial Policies (see attached).
- 2.1.9 Nasc will reimburse WSA for expenditure on the project upon receipt of the requisite documentation to include receipts, vouched expenses, invoices etc. in line with Nasc Financial Policy.
- 2.1.10 Provide training/guidance to the Community where required.
- 2.1.11 Utilise Nasc, networks and contacts to ensure best possible outcomes for the families.
- 2.1.12 Identify an allocate a designated bank account for the management of the fund on behalf of Wicklow Syria Appeal

2.2 WSA commits to:

- 2.2.1 Work in partnership with Nasc to ensure the identified family are welcomed and integrated into life in Wicklow.
- 2.2.2 Identify suitable accommodation for the family
- 2.2.3 Provide essential items to enable the family to settle in the community including some initial funding in the way of both gifts and loans as deemed appropriate by both Nasc and Wicklow Syria Appeal (WSA).
- 2.2.4 Provide the relevant introduction and access to social services, medical & dental care, schools, sports clubs, language tuition and other services as deemed necessary.

2.2.5 Fund raise on behalf of and according to Nasc policies. All fund raising on behalf of Nasc will be specifically for and limited to the project outlined in this MOU.

2.2.6. WSA will maintain detailed up-to-date records of all fund-raising efforts, funds raised, spent & committed and provide such records to Nasc on request for over-sight.

2.2.7 It is the intention of this project to leave the Syrian family in a position of full self-reliance within 12 months of arrival and therefore WSA and Nasc will cease any further commitments to the family thereafter. This will be reviewed with Nasc as the project progresses.

2.3 POLICIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS THAT RELATE TO AND ARE RELEVANT FOR THIS MOU.

- 2.2 Nasc Financial Policy
- 2.3 Nasc Child Protection Policy
- 2.4 Nasc Staff Handbook
- 2.5 WSA policies and procedures
- 2.6 List of key representatives and roles from both Nasc and WSA.

3. GENERAL TERMS:

- 3.1 This MoU will be reviewed 3 monthly by both Nasc and WSA to ensure on going suitability and can only be amended by the agreement of both parties.
- 3.2 if there is an interim amendment needed, then a meeting will be arranged between representatives of Nasc and WSA
- 3.3 All amendments will be agreed documented, and amendment meetings minutes kept.
- 3.4 Should any key members or representatives outlined in this document change, then all parties will be notified and the relevant documents including this MoU will be updated
- 3.5 It is expected that after a family have been settled in Wicklow and are considered self-reliant, this MoU will be terminated and cease to be enforced. It is expected this will be the case within 12 months of arrival of the family.
- 3.6 Any modification of this Agreement shall be effective only if agreed in writing and signed by all the parties and the intention to amend this Agreement is clearly expressed.
- 3.7 No party may assign or subcontract any of its rights or obligations under this Agreement without the prior written consent of the other party, except that either party shall be entitled to subcontract, assign or otherwise transfer this Agreement (including any benefit or obligation under it) to any other company which is under the common ownership with the transferring party with the prior consent of the other party, which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- 3.8 Relationship between the parties is that of independent contractors and nothing in this Agreement shall create, or be deemed to create, a partnership or relationship of employer and employee between the parties.
- 3.9 No waiver by a party of any breach of another's obligation shall constitute a waiver of any prior or subsequent breach and no party shall be affected by any delay, failure or omission to enforce or express forbearance granted in respect of any obligation.

3.10 This Agreement, comprises the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all (whether oral or written) previous statements made between the parties and all previous agreements.

3.11 This Agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the law for the time being in force in the Republic of Ireland and each of the parties hereby submits to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of the Republic of Ireland.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

4.1 Each party to this Agreement hereby undertakes to keep the terms of this agreement, together with all information relating to the business or affairs of the other party communicated to it ("Confidential Information") hereunder or otherwise confidential and confirm that it shall not disclose such Confidential Information to any person (other than to its parent subsidiary or affiliated companies, auditors or other professional advisors as required by law) and shall not use such Confidential Information other than for the purposes hereof.

4.2 In the event a party is required to disclose Confidential Information, the party so obliged shall give the other party prompt written notice of such requirement prior to such disclosure and such assistance as it reasonable in obtaining an order protecting the information from public disclosure.

4.3 Any public announcement relating to this Agreement shall be made only jointly by the parties hereto.

5. NOTICES

5.1 Notices or other communications given pursuant to this Agreement shall be in writing and shall be sufficiently given:

5.2 if delivered by hand or sent by post to the address and for the attention of the person set forth in this clause of the party to which the notice or communication is being given or to such other address and for the attention of such other person as such party shall communicate to the party giving the notice or communication; or

5.3 if sent by facsimile or email to the correct facsimile number / email address of the party to which it is being sent.

6.0 TERM AND TERMINATION

6.1 This Agreement shall commence on the Commencement Date and unless terminated earlier in accordance with its terms, shall continue until the expiration of the term.

6.2 A party (the "Initiating Party") may terminate this Agreement with immediate effect by written notice to the other party (the "Defaulting Party") on or at any time after the occurrence of one or more of the events specified below in relation to the Defaulting Party.

The events are:

6.3 Material Breach

6.4 The Defaulting Party being in material breach of obligations under this Agreement and, if the breach is capable of remedy, failing to remedy the breach within 14 days starting on the day after receipt of written notice from the Initiating Party giving full details of

the alleged Material Breach and requiring the Defaulting Party to remedy the breach; for the purposes of this clause an alleged Material Breach is capable of remedy if time is not of the essence in performance of the obligation and if the Defaulting Party can comply with the obligation within the 14 day period; or

6.5 Insolvency

6.6 A petition is presented, or an order is made, or a resolution is passed for the winding-up of the Defaulting Party (unless such order or resolution is part of voluntary scheme for the reconstruction or amalgamation of the party as a solvent corporation and the resulting corporation, person, undertakes to be bound by this Agreement);

6.7 Any action is taken by its officers or any other person for the winding-up dissolution or striking off of the Defaulting Party;

6.8 Any action is taken by any person to appoint a receiver, administrator, administrative receiver, examiner, trustee or similar officer of the Defaulting Party or any property or assets of the Defaulting Party or any such receiver, administrator, administrative receiver, examiner, trustee or similar officer is appointed

6.9 In the event of any termination, howsoever arising:

- I. all communications and Press releases in respect of such termination shall be agreed by the parties hereto;
- II. Each party shall pay to the other any amounts due under this Agreement within 30 days of termination

PARTY A REPRESENTATIVE		PARTY B REPRESENTATIVE	
Signature:		Signature:	
Name:	<u>FIONA FINT</u>	Name:	<u>Michael John</u>
Position:	<u>CEO</u>	Position:	<u>Co-Chair</u>
Date:	<u>7/12/17</u>	Date:	<u>12/Dec/17</u>

12th Dec 2017

Appendix 7: Work completed on the house:

- Skip to remove materials, carpets, sleeping bags, mattresses etc.
- Plumbers, electricians required as well as builder.
- External walls resurfaced in several places and all painted.
- Significant Repairs to the roof & gutters
- All internal walls & windows repainted
- Vents inserted and Internal Damp treated
- Attic insulated and party wall & fire wall built & certified.
- Chimney rebuilt – significant cost.
- Central Heating Clean-out, 2 radiators replaced and leaks fixed
- Significant rewiring and renewing of sockets and switches.
- New ESB consumer unit and full electric check.
- New Electric shower install required to give 2 showers.
- Tiling in bathroom and around fire-place
- New flooring stairs and bedrooms.
- New carpet downstairs
- Parquet floor downstairs repairs.
- Gas Boiler Service.
- New Kitchen Worktop.

House Refurbishment New Items included:

Cooker, fridge/freezer, dishwasher, clothes drier, washing machine, kitchen delph & cutlery, hoover, stove, beds & bed linen, 2 x radiators, showers & fittings, tiling, carpet, blinds & curtains.

Appendix 8:

Contact Wicklow Syria Appeal

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss the project, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please email WSA at the address below:

Email: wicklowsyriaappeal@gmail.com

See also www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com

And <https://twitter.com/WSyriaAppeal>

Appendix 9: WSA Financial Statement: Basic Headings for Income and Expenditure

A significant proportion of expenditure related to making ready a house for the family. We had agreed to find suitable accommodation for the family rather than to attempt to get the family registered for social housing. As a group we agreed that if we could source our own house for the family, then we would avoid any negative feedback and ultimately show how a community can come together to source a house. The intention was that once sourced and made ready that the family would then claim housing assistance if necessary. We also made the decision that we would not do public fund-raising activities such as bag packing and on the street donations. We did this to avoid any unpleasant feedback from those not fully aware of the family situation, also to avoid potential future embarrassment or unpleasantness for the family when they arrived.

The house identified was in a bad state of repair and estimated cost to make this house habitable was in the region of €30,000. Once the work sheet was identified a group of volunteers [around 15 at any one time] got together work on the house. The fact that volunteers were involved meant that we had achieved significant savings on the overall cost of repairs. We would estimate at least 300 volunteer hours in total was used to make the house ready. There were still some gaps in expertise in the volunteer group so we did have to engage professional services such as builders, electricians , carpenters and plumbers. There was a significant amount of good will from these professionals and a number of them gave their time at cost or free of charge and WSA bore the cost of the raw materials. As we were dealing with a private landlord we came to an agreement to offset our costs against 7 months rent once the family were in residence. In addition, many providers in the area supplied goods free of charge or at cost.

As the house was unfurnished, we had to purchase white goods, furniture and bedding. Local suppliers were extremely generous with either reduced cost or extended payment terms as we waited for funds to come in from our various fund raising activities. Also we reached out to our networks in the community to donate any of these items that were required and the response was overwhelming. In addition, the Irish Red Cross provided household kits in the form of bedding, sheets, toiletries and cooking utensils.

To date the overall cost of the project is approximately €34,000. With support from Nasc and local fundraising activities, we raised approximately €32,000 in funds and have a surplus of €2,000 left for contingencies.

The total of the housing cost came in at approximately €20,000 due to the generosity of a builder in our group who gave considerable time and materials free of charge. The cost of actually making the house ready was in the region of €14,000 with other house costs being in the region of €6,000 of which the headline costs are as follows: White goods, initial food supplies, taxis to medical appointments, school clothes and school supplies.

Appendix 10: Documentation required by family prior to registering in Ireland

1. Documentation required to facilitate travel

- i. A letter from the Department of Justice (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service) to the family member already in Ireland stating that the other named members of her family may travel to Ireland.
- ii. A Letter from the UNHCR documenting the family's official status as refugees
- iii. Letter and Travel Documents from the International Committee of the Red Cross, issued via the Irish Red Cross.

2. After arriving in Ireland

- I. A Letter of Support from Nasc stating that they (Nasc) supported the entry of the family to Ireland and that they were entitled to *“receive, upon and subject to the same conditions applicable to Irish citizens, the same medical care and the same social welfare benefits as those to which Irish citizens are entitled.”*

Appendix 11: Family Review of their Experience in Coming to Ireland

Principle reasons for travelling to Ireland:

- Lack of proper medical care for the children
- Lack of proper educational facilities for the children who had been achieving well in Syria
- Father's lack of a job in Lebanon

(The family travelled to Ireland from a refugee camp in the Lebanon, where they had spent the previous 5 years. Hence, perhaps, the fact that "fleeing a war situation" does not feature on their list of reasons for coming to Ireland; they had already fled that situation to the more secure but still inadequate refugee camp.)

Concerns prior to arrival:

- Around the freedom to practise their religion;
- Around their children's education possibilities;
- That the disruptions around refugees & how they were being treated in Europe at the time would spread to Ireland;

Expectations and Reality:

Expectations have been surpassed in terms of WSA & community support, education and medical care:

- Parents are delighted with the education being offered to the children
- Parents are delighted with the overall medical care, especially in relation to the specific needs of some family members.
- Parents really value the care, support and friendship of the WSA members. This care etc manifests itself in so many ways, including WSA interest in and support for the children, their health and education, and also the family learning English. They feel that WSA treats them as people and not as refugees, and this is important to them.
- Parents also feel welcomed by the local community and by any officials they have met in hospitals, social protection etc.
- The speed with which they were set up on the system and received medical cards and welfare payments was very important to them as they had been worried about being a liability to WSA.

Other expectations:

The family were a little disappointed that there was no garden with the house; this limited the playing area for the children.

Concerns:

- The family are really concerned about other family members and would dearly like for them all to be reunited in Ireland.

Goals – Short Term:

- The family are concerned about being a burden on WSA in terms of transport. They are hoping that one of them can get driving and have a car asap.
- The father is hoping also to get work asap, perhaps through a course in Bray & maybe with WSA support.
- To become more involved with the local community.

Goals – Long Term:

- Have an income to be independent of WSA and the State.
- Allow each child to achieve to their educational potential & be happy.
- Become fluent in English and contribute to the wider community; also perhaps help with other refugee families.

JERSEY DAY APPEAL LAUNCHED FOR SYRIA

BY MYLES BUCHANAN

WICKLOW Syria Appeal and three local Wicklow town schools will host a Jersey Day appeal on Friday, October 14.

Wicklow Syria Appeal was set up to support those effected by conflict in Syria in honour of the 2003 Syrian Special Olympic team twinned with Wicklow town.

In 2003 eight Syrian Athletes and their four coaches were hosted by Wicklow town as their base during the Special Olympics held in Ireland that year.

Due to the war in Syria, the Wicklow community lost contact with their Syria friends and have no information on their whereabouts.

Wicklow town's Dermot Costello was Chairman of the Wicklow Special Olympics Committee in 2003. In 2016, in light of the ever worsening situation in Syria and another Olympics this year, Dermot got a group of the local community together to form Wicklow Syria Appeal.

Wicklow Syria Appeal are all volunteers donating their time and skills for free.

Wicklow Syria Appeals first event is Jersey Day this Friday. They are working with three secondary schools in Wicklow who are supporting Jersey Day - East Glendalough School, Dominican College Wicklow and Colaiste Chill Mhantain.

'Wicklow Syria Appeals hope is that the Wicklow community would support Wicklow Syria Appeal in raising awareness about conflict in Syria and fundraising the help humanitarian efforts in Syria.

'In this way we can rekindle our connection with the people of Syria as in 2003,' says Dermot.

The transition year students at East Glendalough School, Dominican College Wicklow and Colaiste Chill Mhantain, have taken on running Jersey Day within their schools. GOAL's Education Officer has

Pam Beacom, Mick Nolan, David Ryan, Fr Donal Roche, Jess Costello, Dermot Costello, Juliet and Laura Devereux, Mary Rose Devereux and Paul Hennessy of the Wicklow Syria Appeal.



already visited each school to educate them about GOAL's work in Syria.

Wicklow Syria Appeal and are now asking both primary schools and businesses in Wicklow to join

us in supporting Jersey Day and take part on Friday. Wicklow Syria Appeal is made up of a group of volunteers across the Wicklow business, educational, sporting and religious communities.

Wicklow Syria Appeal plans public meeting

LINKS TO COUNTRY FORGED DURING 2003 SPECIAL OLYMPICS GAMES

By MYLES BUCHANAN

WICKLOW Syria Appeal will host a public meeting on Wednesday, November 8, at 8 p.m. in the Grand Hotel.

Wicklow Syria Appeal is a volunteer group which was set up in honour of the 2003 Syrian Special Olympics team's twinning with Wicklow town. In 2003, eight Syrian Athletes and their four coaches used the town as their base during the Special Olympics held in Ireland that year.

Due to the war in Syria, the Wicklow

community has lost contact with their Syrian friends and have no information on their whereabouts.

Explaining the thinking behind the formation of the group, Chairman Dermot Costello said: 'Wicklow Syria Appeal wish to engage with the wider community of Wicklow around what we can do to help Syrian refugees coming to Ireland. We have partnered with Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, a migrant and refugee rights charity, to develop an exciting and unique community project that can make a positive difference to the lives of those affected by war in Syria though community action, education and fundraising.'

Nasc is a non-governmental organisation working for an integrated society based on the principles of human rights, social justice and equality.

'Throughout 2016 and 2017, Wicklow Syria Appeal ran education programmes

in local schools, supported Transition Year projects and fundraised to support NGO organisations working in Syria,' added Mr Costello.

'Now, Wicklow Syria Appeal volunteers have decided to focus on what we, the Wicklow community, could do to help the Syrian refugees coming to Ireland, and we have partnered with Nasc to develop a really innovative community project to support Syrian refugees.'

Wicklow Syria Appeal is a dedicated group of volunteers across the Wicklow business, education and religious communities who want to make a positive difference to the lives of Syrian families. The public meeting on Wednesday, November 8, is open to all.

'It is only with community involvement and feedback that Wicklow Syria Appeal can truly become a community project,' said Mr Costello.

Fundraising show in aid of Syria Appeal

The Wicklow Syria Appeal will host a gala concert this weekend to raise much-needed funds and awareness for the project.

The fundraiser on Sunday, November 26, takes place in St Patrick's Church at 7.30 p.m and features choirs from local primary schools, along with a variety of mixed voice adult choirs. Guest soloist Lorna Breen will also perform.

The concert will be directed by Tony Norton and doors will open at 7 p.m, for a 7.30 p.m start. Tickets are €10 or €20 for a family ticket.

The Wicklow Syria Appeal (WSA) was formed to assist in some small way those affected by the Syrian conflict, and in light of Wicklow town's association with the Syrian Special Olympics team who stayed with local families for the World Special Olympics

Games of 2003.

The group recently held a public meeting where co-Chairman Mick Nolan explained their origins and discussed future fundraising activities.

To date, WSA has worked with Transition Year students and fundraised for the Irish NGO GOAL, which is providing humanitarian aid on the ground in Syria along with refugee camps on the borders of that Country.

Wicklow Syria Appeal hopes to bring a Syrian refugee family to live in Wicklow town under a UNHCR Family Reunification Programme. To do this, WSA has partnered with Cork charity Nasc which has experience in this area.

If anyone would like further information or to assist Wicklow Syria Appeal, they can visit www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com or follow the group on Facebook.

Syrian relay appeal is massive success in Ashford

By ESTHER HAYDEN

THE MAMMOTH task of completing the gruelling 4,721km distance from Syria to Wicklow got under way last Saturday in Ashford.

There was a large turnout at the event with young and old and even some four legged friends forsaking the lure of Christmas festivities and warm firesides to support a fun relay race to raise funds for Wicklow Syria Appeal.

The event hosted by Ashford GAA and supported by the soccer and athletic clubs was organised by Paula Kearney, an Ashford resident and volunteer with Wicklow Syria Appeal and her volley of helpers.

All ages were represented but it was the children, some as young as four, who stole the show with their eager enthusiasm to do 'one more lap'. A score board recorded each completed lap and was subtracted from the total of 4,721 kilometres which represents the distance from Wicklow to the Syrian city of Homs.

It is from this city of Homs that a

Syrian family, currently living as refugees in Lebanon, hope to make the journey to resettle Wicklow in early 2018. The Saturday Sport for Syria event was part of a drive by Wicklow Syria Appeal to support the family to come and live in Wicklow.

'The Ashford Sport for Syria event has commenced the first 221 kilometres of the journey and helped us raise awareness for the community project and funds to prepare for the family's arrival', said chairman Dermot Costello.

Hot dogs, hot beverages and other Christmas delicacies were served in the clubhouse to help warm people up after the event. Some parents spoke of their children's interest in helping a family in distress. 'Despite the onset of the chilly December evening it was heart-warming to witness the generosity of people reaching out to those refugees who have suffered, lost everything and are soon to begin a new chapter of their lives in Wicklow', said Dermot.

Wicklow Syria Appeal is made up

Back: David Ryan, Mary Frances Sinnott, Paul Hennessy, Nick Nolan, and Peter Shearer. Front: Paula Kearney.



of a group of volunteers across the Wicklow business, education and religious communities. The group formed in 2016 to support those af-

ected by conflict in Syria, in honour of the 2003 Syrian Special Olympics teams twinning with Wicklow Town. The volunteer group came together to

enable the Wicklow community make a positive difference to the lives of those affected by war in Syria through community action and education.

Fresh start for Syrian family



THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS PROMISED TO SETTLE 4,000 REFUGEES FLEEING CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA. REPORTER DAVID MEDCALF SPOKE TO LOCAL ACTIVISTS WHO ARE ALL SET TO OFFER A HOME TO NINE OF THEM.

The news of good news has been greeted by a family of nine, including the Syrian family, who are all set to arrive in Wicklow in the next few weeks. The family consists of a mother, a father and seven children. They are all currently living in a temporary shelter in Lebanon. The family is being resettled in Wicklow as part of the Irish Government's commitment to settle 4,000 Syrian refugees. The family is being resettled in Wicklow as part of the Irish Government's commitment to settle 4,000 Syrian refugees.

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Public Affairs, Bernard Ryan, Mary Devereux, Chairman, Jack O'Connell, Mick Nolan, Mary Rose Devereux, Public Affairs, Peter Shearer and the Wicklow Syria Appeal.



The family is being resettled in Wicklow as part of the Irish Government's commitment to settle 4,000 Syrian refugees. The family is being resettled in Wicklow as part of the Irish Government's commitment to settle 4,000 Syrian refugees. The family is being resettled in Wicklow as part of the Irish Government's commitment to settle 4,000 Syrian refugees.

WICKLOW PEOPLE | Wednesday, January 31, 2018



Charlie Kavanagh with Mary Rose Devereux, Mick Nolan and Peter Shearer at Charlie's talk in aid of the Wicklow Syria Appeal in Wicklow Sailing Club.

Cruise talk raises over €1,000 for Syria Appeal

MEMBERS of the sailing fraternity and Wicklow community enjoyed an evening with veteran sailor Charlie Kavanagh as he regaled them with tales of his sailing trip around Ireland. The event, hosted by Wicklow Sailing Club, was a fundraiser for the Wicklow Syria Appeal (WSA) and the late Dermot Costello, who founded WSA, was at the forefront of many people's minds on the night. Introducing the evening, Mick Nolan paid tribute to Dermot's generous spirit. He also outlined the origin of the WSA - from hosting Syrian athletes during the Special Olympics Games of 2003 to the brutal Syrian civil war and the present efforts to bring a Syrian family, who are currently living in a temporary shack in Lebanon, to settle in Wicklow.

A minute's silence in Dermot's memory was observed. Charlie's presentation captivated the audience from the start. His story was littered with quirky details, beautiful sights and memorable events, from being unable to receive the King of Tory, to a glass sculpture on Inishturk and a welcoming party of dolphins in Donegal. At each stage of the trip, Charlie was joined by different crew, which no doubt added to the delight of the journey. The presentation was accompanied by a rich abundance of images of the Irish countryside and coastline. The night attracted a full house and raised over €1,000. For further information or to assist Wicklow Syria Appeal, visit www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com or follow them on Facebook.

Appendix 13: Agenda for Nasc Training Day

Agenda for the Day

11:00 Arrival / refreshments

11:30 Intros (MN)

Clarifying community sponsorship, with some background to Nasc and its work (FF)

12:00 Update on the family (FH)

12:30 Cultural competency discussion (JD)

1:15 Review of the community sponsorship template & questions incl. practicalities, roles, key actions (FH/FF)

3:00 Visit the house

3:30 Communications discussion – plan, messaging (JD)

4:00 Close

Appendix 14:

External bodies and their contact details:

1. Citizens Information

Website: <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/>

2. Community Sponsorship Ireland - <http://integration.ie/>

You can find links to the following documents at: <https://www.nascireland.org/current-projects/community-sponsorship>

1. An Introduction to Community Sponsorship Ireland
2. Community Sponsorship Policy Framework
3. Community Sponsorship Application Form
4. Community Sponsorship Guide for Prospective Sponsors
5. Community Sponsorship Guide for Sponsors' Settlement Planning
6. Community Sponsorship Settlement Plan Template

3. Housing Assistance Programme (HAP)

To be eligible for HAP, you must first apply for and be approved for social housing support by your local authority.

Website: www.hap.ie

4. Local Education Board

See directory list at: <https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/>

5. Local Health Board

See directory list at: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/>

6. Nasc:

Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre, 34 Paul St., Cork. T12 W14H.

Telephone: 021 427 3594. Email: reception@Nascireland.org

Website: <http://www.Nascireland.org/>

7. Insurance Company:

BHP Insurance, BHP Community Ltd
Unit 16A, First Floor, Fonthill Business Park,
Dublin D22 F2P1

Telephone: 01 620 2030 Email: info@bhpinsurance.ie

Website: www.bhpinsurance.ie

8. International Organisation for Migration:

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
17 Route des Morillons
1218 Grand-Saconnex
Switzerland

Email: hq@iom.int

Website: <https://www.iom.int/>

9. Irish Red Cross

Eve Leonard
Migration Programme Manager
Irish Red Cross
16 Merrion Sq
Dublin 2

Telephone: 087 1521043.

Email: eleonard@redcross.ie

Website: www.redcross.ie

10. Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)

Website: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/>

11. Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration

Website: <http://www.integration.ie/>

12. Reception and Integration Agency (RIA)

Website: <http://www.ria.gov.ie/>

13. Sponsor Refugees: The Citizens UK Foundation for the Sponsorship of Refugees (established in October 2017).

Website: <http://www.sponsorrefugees.org/>

14. Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme

Website:

<http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/SYRIAN%20HUMANITARIAN%20ADMISSION%20PROGRAMME>

15. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Website: <http://www.unhcr.ie/>

Appendix 15: Sample posters used for publicity

1. Sport for Syria Fundraising and Awareness Events run at Local Sports Clubs

SPORT FOR SYRIA

WICKLOW SYRIA APPEAL

START
HOMS

FINISH
WICKLOW

Please Join Us!

Help **Wicklow Syria Appeal** make the 4721 Kilometres Journey from Homs in Syria to Wicklow to support Syrians whose lives have been devastated by War.

PLEASE JOIN US!

How many Kilometres could your team collectively cover at your training session?

Dedicate a few laps of the pitch or races or games to help Syrian immigrants, measure your distance and donate €2 per participant on the day. All donations go directly to NASC the Irish Immigrants Support Centre.

Contact **Wicklow Syria Appeal** to sign up your Club.

 info@wicklowsyriaappeal.com  [WWSyriaAppeal](https://twitter.com/WWSyriaAppeal)

 [wicklowsyriaappeal](https://www.facebook.com/wicklowsyriaappeal)  [wicklowsyriaappeal.com](https://twitter.com/wicklowsyriaappeal)

SPORT FOR SYRIA will be taking place at :

Date: _____

Time: _____

Bring: _____

RUN 4721 kms from **Wicklow** to **Homs, SYRIA**

2. Public Meeting to get community feedback and encourage new members



Wicklow Community Public Meeting

Wednesday 8th November 2017
8pm Grand Hotel

Wicklow Syria Appeal is a volunteer group supporting those effected by conflict in Syria.

Wicklow Syria Appeal wish to engage with the wider community of Wicklow around what we can do to help Syrian refugees coming to Ireland. We have partnered with Nasc, the Irish Immigrant Support Centre, to develop an exciting and unique community project.

Please come along and share your thoughts.



[facebook.com/wicklowsyriaappeal](https://www.facebook.com/wicklowsyriaappeal) 

[@WWsyriaappeal](https://www.instagram.com/WWsyriaappeal) 

info@wicklowsyriaappeal.com

www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com

3. Gala Concert, fundraising and public awareness event.

Songs for Syria

Hosted by The Wicklow Syria Appeal Volunteer Group

WICKLOW SYRIA APPEAL

info@wicksyriaappeal.com
wicksyriaappeal.com
WickSyriaAppeal
wicksyriaappeal.com

GALA CONCERT

Directed by Tony Norton

with performances by

The Wicklow Town Primary Schools Choirs, The Inver Ladies Choir,
The Céilí Community Choir, The Wicklow Community Choir,
The Avoca Valley Singers and Guest Soloist Lorna Breen.

on **Sunday, 26th November**

in **St Patrick's Catholic Church, Wicklow Town**

Tickets at the door from 7pm, concert **7.30pm**

Tickets **€10 + €20 family**

For more details please contact Jack by phone or email: 085 1727654 / hinkoadj@gmail.com

4. Slow Cruise Talk, Fundraising Event



Hear about Charlie's 5 month cruise around Ireland in 2017. Learn about some of our hidden gems and characters he met along the way.

Support the Wicklow Syria Appeal in their efforts to integrate a Syrian refugee family into the community of Wicklow Town.



www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com info@wicklowsyriaappeal.com

5. Fundraising Concert.

**WICKLOW
SYRIA APPEAL**

Sing for Syria

*With
The Brittas Bay Singers*

8:00 p.m. Friday 2nd February
Wicklow Sailing Club

Admission: €10
For further information contact:
087 7907869

E: info@wicklowsyriaappeal.com
www.wicklowsyriaappeal.com

Appendix 16:

Sample comments from WSA volunteers on their experience with the project.

*“This has taken more time and effort than I ever imagined **and** has been one of the most worthwhile projects I have ever been involved with”*

“Dermot Costello really anticipated the broad scope of this project, bringing such a diverse group of people together with wide ranging skills”

“I have made wonderful new friends in the family; they are amazing people and we are lucky to know them and call them our friends”

“Our group has grown and changed over the past year, each new person bringing a new energy, perspective, skills and friendship”

“The Al Sulaiman’s call us their “second family” and that is really how it is. We have got to know each other so well over the past year, and regard them as our extended family too”