

Arrival planning

Arrival day is the real start of your Community Sponsorship journey. Here we outline what to expect, and ideas for you to include in your plan. Remember however, every group and family are different; in all of your planning ensure that you have space to reflect on whether your plans are working.

Arrival day

The day you're waiting for is here! It's going to be a hugely exciting time for your group members, but at the heart of this excitement is a family arriving to the UK who are likely to be exhausted and overwhelmed, not to mention likely to be confused arriving in a new country and getting to know your group. You will have already decided who will be meeting the family at the airport and have planned your arrival, departure and the transport required to get the family back to the accommodation you have ready for them. There will also be things to bear in mind when welcome a family during Covid-restrictions.

Preparing to meet the family

Get to the airport in plenty of time for the flight to arrive, make sure you know the layout of the airport (including where the toilets are), where the flight will be and where you have arranged to meet the IOM escort. You should expect to be at the airport for quite some time after the flight lands and should plan accordingly. You'll receive a notification from the escort when the family have landed. Sometimes the IOM escorts will be accompanying a number of families, and groups have told us that they are usually amongst the last off the plane. You'll recognise the IOM escort as they will be wearing an IOM vest, and the family members will each have an IOM branded carrier bag.



Documentation

The family will not have Biometric Residency Permits on arrival; these will be sent to a named member of your Group within 7-10 working days of arrival. Until this time, the family members will each have a visa which gives them the right to enter and be in the UK. Following Britain leaving the European Union, the visa will be attached to a Form for Affixing the Visa (FAV). Once the BRP has been received, the FAV should be returned to the Home Office.

Greeting the family

It can be hard to navigate how to greet someone, as much of this is usually mutually decided. Hugging and shaking hands with the family should be avoided upon arrival – a friendly “hello!” will be the best way to go! Make sure you introduce everyone by the name they wish to be called (e.g., “Mr Smith” or “Jim”).

As we’ve said, this day is the fruition of such hard work from members of your Group, and it can be something that you wish to document. However, we suggest placing the family at the centre of this; they are likely to have been travelling for 24 hours+, and they have just met you and may not wish to have their photograph taken. We’d suggest that if you do wish to document their arrival, you only do so with informed consent, and you share this after the family have started to establish their lives in the community.

It’s also worth thinking about how you welcome the family at the airport. Hand-written signs are a great idea, with the name of the family and a written greeting in the language they read and write (if they are literate in their own language). We’d recommend avoiding using the word ‘refugees’ on signage – it may not be the way in which the family you are supporting wish to be known. We have heard from others who have welcomed that they have had negative responses from people at airports when explaining that they are meeting refugees, so this might be something to bear in mind.

Travel from the airport

As you would expect, the family will be arriving with luggage – the amount of this can vary greatly. You should do all you can to avoid separating the family from their luggage.

Before you begin the journey to their new home, explain how long the journey will take, how to make you aware should they need to stop on the journey, and any important information of which they should be aware (e.g., non-smoking vehicles, wearing seatbelts, using car seats for children). Ask if they would like to use the toilets prior to leaving or offer them hand sanitizer to use before they get into the vehicle.

For the journey, we advise you supply bottled water, light snacks (should you wish), sick bags and wet wipes. Also have face masks available, should people wish to wear them in the vehicle. If they’re arriving during the winter period, then you may wish to keep a blanket at hand too (they won’t be used to UK cold weather yet!). You may also wish to provide something to entertain the children. Make sure a parent is sitting next to young children should they need to comfort them during the journey.

Arriving at the property

The family will already have been told they must quarantine for 10 days upon arrival (make sure that they know arrival day counts as day 0), but it's useful to have this reiterated again. Even though the family must quarantine, you are allowed to go into the property with them on arrival to show them where things are and how to use certain items, such as showing them how to use the microwave (especially as you don't want their first meal in the UK to be a cold one!). Once entering the property together, [government guidelines](#) recommend wearing face masks when in enclosed spaces with people you do not usually meet (although it is no longer a legal requirement to do so).

You will have prepared a welcome pack, put groceries in the kitchen and made sure all essential household items are in place. Allow the family time to explore on arrival, but keep in mind that there are certain things that you will need to explain before you come away and give them time to themselves.

Groups have told us that one of the first things families wish to do on arrival is to let their loved ones in other countries know that they have arrived safely. Make sure you pass on an unlocked SIM or provide a mobile phone, and make sure the family know how to access the Wi-Fi in the property.

Go through the key things in your [Welcome Pack](#) on arrival – this should include:

- Who group members are and how to contact the right people for help. You may want to consider how members of the group will identify themselves to the family if they have not yet met them – a photo board in the welcome pack can help
- How to use central heating/hot water.
- How to securely lock the property.
- Details of their full address and location.
- How to contact the emergency services.
- How to access the 24/7 interpreter support.
- Location and how a smoke alarm is operated.
- Try your best to read when you need to come away from the family, they will have been travelling for a long period by this point and may simply want some time as a family.

Make sure you are clear on when you will next be in contact and what you will be doing when you next meet. For example, let them know if you'll be doing a Zoom meeting with them the next day, or a doorstep visit. Ensure they're aware of the need to do Covid-19 tests on day 2 and day 8 of their quarantine period, and that you've arranged for this to take place.

At the time of writing, this article reflected current Covid guidance. It is important that you check [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for the most up-to-date information.