

Actions & Acts

Refugees Welcome - General Election 2017

Campaigning Tips & Tricks

Citizens UK has helped lead Britain's civic response to the refugee crisis, supporting the creation of 92 local Refugee Welcome groups and campaigning to increase the numbers of Syrian refugees resettled, pass the Dubs amendment, secure a commitment to resettle 3,000 children at risk from the Middle East and North Africa, and establish the Community Sponsorship Scheme.

Citizens UK's Safe Passage project evolved out of this work to open access to safe and legal routes for refugees through community organising, advocacy and strategic casework. To date we have helped over 1000 unaccompanied child refugees and vulnerable adults find safe and legal routes to protection.

Approach to take

Aim to build relationships not polarise

Ahead of the election, it's in your interest to build a relationship with the candidate ultimately elected as a basis for working with them constructively after the election. It's worth giving them an opportunity now to express their views so you can hold them to account for their actions later.

Though individuals may disagree with particular parties or policies, charities must (by law) remain nonpartisan (please see the document: **charity campaigning during an election: dos and don'ts**). Additionally, pursuing a working relationship with all potential MPs will be much more useful in the long-term than polarising them. Getting a seat at the table now will give you leverage down the line.

The reason to act

Britain has a proud history of welcoming refugees. In recent years public pressure has led to significant expansion in our national commitment to resettle refugees and to allow communities to take responsibility for welcome and resettlement. However, those commitments are not guaranteed beyond this election. Our duty, as part of civil society, is to enable citizens to get involved in the election process and hold all candidates to account.

Potential local actions could include:

- A public letter published in local press, calling all candidates to protect routes to sanctuary for refugees, signed by local groups working with refugees and asylum-seekers
- your group attending local hustings, with refugees welcome signs, and with prepared questions to ask the candidates
- an event where all candidates are invited to meet with your group to hear about the work that has gone on in your area, and to be asked questions about whether they will work with you if elected

How to?

How to secure a public meeting

Credential your group. Emphasise the work you and your members have done, the numbers of people who will be present, and the positions you hold in your community. Candidates are ultimately looking to win round voters during this time, so should see the chance to speak with a group of constituents as an opportunity. Keep meetings brief (1.5 hours max), include an array of voices, and keep them lively and engaging. Tell stories - stories of the work going on in your area to welcome refugees, stories of the journeys refugees are taking to reach sanctuary and the reasons they leave. Stories are far more powerful than facts and figures (although include a few of those too).

How to write to your local press

Get writing to them, quickly! Again, credential your group, and include the names of as many members (or names of as many local organisations, institutions, etc) as possible. Begin with the soft asks, and then continue with the hard asks (see 'Suggested

How to attend a hustings

Details of local hustings can be found online and through local press - we can point you in the right direction if you're struggling. If you are attending a hustings as a group, please contact us at Safe Passage for 'refugees welcome' t-shirts and other resources. We suggest you prepare a copy of the questions (see 'Suggested Asks') for each member of your group, so everyone is prepared to ask if the opportunity arises. When asking a question, credential your group so the candidates know you are asking on behalf of a larger group.

Remember:

For every action you take, it is vital you record it (take photos, write notes) and share those with us and on social media using the hashtag #RefugeesWelcome and @SafePassage. This enables us to keep track of all the work that is going on and the pledges that have been made, but it also allows us to share what you are up to with others across the country so that they might be inspired to act too!