



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Introduction: IOM, in partnership with the Home Office, currently provides cultural orientation sessions for Syrian refugees prior to their arrival in the UK to enhance their integration process by providing them with accurate and relevant information about the UK. In addition to this, however, IOM's experience in numerous countries has found that integration is a two-way process and works best when both refugees and those working with refugees in receiving communities (local government, social/refugee workers, health and education workers, etc.) have a good understanding of each other's expectations, cultural differences, and practices.

IOM has therefore implemented two-way integration programmes in various other countries, partnering cultural orientation sessions for refugees with informational sessions on the refugee communities for local authorities. Following the success of these programmes, IOM UK has secured funding to deliver similar support to local authorities resettling Syrians in the UK.

Objective: To support local authorities in reducing the adjustment period for Syrian refugees and providing strong, appropriate integration services for Syrian refugees by increasing local knowledge of the Syrian communities being resettled in the UK.

Methods: The information sessions are CPD-certified and conducted by invitation from local authorities, with each session tailored to the needs and interests of those authorities. Therefore, the length of the sessions, as well as the topics covered and level of detail, vary to suit individual contexts. Content is continually updated using information gathered from our field offices in the region and other relevant sources to reflect the shifting realities for Syrian refugees prior to resettlement, and we partner with members of the Syrian community to co-facilitate the information sessions and provide their insight into Syrian history and culture.

As sessions are intended to be tailored to local interests, we can add or remove topics as desired. Examples of topics include:

- Modern and ancient Syrian history
- Syria's geography, population demographics, and religions
- Cultural traditions (etiquette, clothing, holidays, diet)
- Ethnic groups of Syria
- Family life
- Education in Syria; schools before and after the war
- The health system
- The Syrian political system
- The Syrian civil war (history, life under war, areas of conflict, parties in the war)
- Syrian displacement and the humanitarian crisis
- The experience of a resettled refugee (life in transit countries, and personal thoughts and feelings around exile, identity, and integration in a new land)
- What is covered in cultural orientation for refugees
- The culture shock experience



Location: We are able to send staff to conduct these sessions regionally to limit time demands and inconvenience to highly busy participants. We are also more than happy to incorporate these sessions into any existing trainings being conducted, should this be of interest.

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Time: We stand ready to work with interested authorities to assess local needs and interests and adapt our content accordingly. We will arrange for informational sessions to take place at a time convenient for participants and specified by the local authority. The duration of each session will be tailored to the time constraints stipulated by the inviting authorities, ranging from 1.5 hours to a full day depending on how in-depth sessions are requested to be.

Next Steps: If you believe you may have an interest for such sessions in your region and would like to explore possibilities, or if you would like more information, please contact Mallory Carlson at 0207 811 6049, or via email at mcarlson@iom.int.

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