**THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL MENTOR**

The Social Mentor (SM) volunteer, lives in the locality where the Programme Member (PM) will be living and so an introduction between the PM and SM only takes place when it is known which locality the PM will be living in.

This introduction is facilitated by the LRDP Recruitment and Resettlement lead and this ensures that the ground rules for the relationship can be discussed and agreed e.g. contact arrangements.

This approach enables the SM to be able to support them to generally settle into the area, by supporting them with such things as:

* Local knowledge
* Form filling
* Getting to know the local area
* If applicable, sharing knowledge about schools
* Signposting to other services that may be useful to other family members e.g. ESOL courses, volunteering opportunities.
* Cultural guidance
* Through the use of social media sites, searching for items for their new accommodation
* Introducing them to local faith groups
* Being a friendly face

This list is not meant to be prescriptive/all-encompassing as each individual PM and their family, are very different and so their needs are also different.

At the initial meeting between PM and SM it is also discussed what to do if either party feels that the relationship isn’t working out.

It is of course a choice for the PM to have a SM, some feel it is not something they need, particularly if they are already living in the area or have lived in the UK for some time. They can of course change their minds at a future time.

As part of the recruitment process, a potential SM will have an initial discussion with the LRDP Recruitment and Resettlement lead, the purpose of this discussion is to hear more about LRDP, e.g. the projects aims, origins and structure, challenges, successes and volunteering roles within LRDP.

This discussion also gives the individual an opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns they may have.

They often need reassurance that they are not expected to secure accommodation nor deal in isolation with any significant problems that arise, that would be the responsibility of the LRDP team.

SMs do receive training and ongoing support from a member of the LRDP team, as well as the opportunity to attend regular online catch-up meetings with a member of the LRDP team and other SM volunteers