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# THE CITY OF COPENHAGEN'S INTEGRATION INITIATIVE FOR REFUGEES

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# The City of Copenhagen's INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

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*“Good and successful integration is a prerequisite for maintaining a strong, coherent and well-functioning city. To me, good integration is inextricably linked to getting a job and having the opportunity to contribute to society as quickly as possible. Therefore, I am proud of our Copenhagen model for the reception and integration of refugees, where we create a good framework for refugees from day one to become part of the city’s community. Not only when it comes to work, but to getting an education and taking part in the city’s life in a broad sense. I believe that Copenhagen hereby is an example of good integration, and that our efforts will benefit both the individual refugee, our companies and society for the better.”*

## **Cecilia Lonning-Skovgaard**

Mayor of Employment and Integration Administration

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The City of Copenhagen was a so-called zero-quota municipality from the introduction of the Integration Act in 1999 to April 2016. This meant that, as a rule, the City of Copenhagen did not receive any refugees during that period. However, in December 2015, the government changed the calculation model which determines how refugees are distributed across the municipalities. Therefore, from May 2016, the City of Copenhagen began receiving refugees from the Danish Immigration Service. In this regard, Copenhagen’s City Council adopted the so-called Copenhagen model for the reception and integration of refugees. Broad political support enabled the City of Copenhagen to adopt a systematic and ambitious approach from the start.

The City of Copenhagen received a total of 117 refugees in 2016 and 169 refugees in 2017.

## **COPENHAGEN MODEL**

### > The Copenhagen model for the reception and integration of refugees contains:

- Early screening of refugees during the asylum phase
- Commencement of a company internship programme within one month
- Retention efforts with a mentor, open counselling and frequent interviews at the job centre
- Offer of health assessments to all refugees
- Offer of holistic mentoring to all refugees
- Goal of max. 6 months in temporary accommodation
- Establishment of Welcome House – venue for refugees, volunteers and civil society organisations
- Offer to be matched with a Copenhagen volunteer

## **Early screening of refugees during the asylum phase**

Early efforts involve, i.a., holding two interviews with all refugees before they are moved to Copenhagen. The first interview held at the asylum centre focuses on the refugees' competences, qualifications and wishes in relation to work and education, as well as their state of health. There is also a matching of expectations, so that refugees become aware of the municipality's expectations in relation to employment, education and participation in the Copenhagen society in general. The second interview will most often be held at the place where the refugees are temporarily accommodated. The focus here is on, i.a., refugees' employment opportunities and the option to use the municipality's other activities (e.g., Welcome House) and be assigned a mentor.

## **Commencement of a company internship programme within one month**

All job-ready refugees must, according to the Integration Act, have a company-oriented offer within one month of their arrival in a municipality. In continuation of this, the City of Copenhagen has set a particularly ambitious goal that all job-ready refugees must both be offered and start in either company internship programme or wage subsidies within the first month. This means that all the municipality's job-ready refugees are acquainted with the Danish labour market from early on and their chance to quickly become part of the labour market or the education system is improved.

## **Retention initiative with a mentor, open counselling and frequent interviews at the job centre**

From 2018, the City of Copenhagen has strengthened the Copenhagen model with a special retention

initiative to support refugees who are employed, in basic integration education (IGU) or education, as far as possible to ensure their continued enrollment. The retention initiative involves offering open counselling at the job centre, as well as frequent interviews with the individual refugees with an intensive education and business perspective. In addition, the initiative involves offering refugees a mentor focusing on retention in employment, IGU or education that can support the individual refugee and help with challenges that may arise regarding employment and education.

## **Health assessments for all refugees**

According to the Integration Act, newly arrived refugees must, when necessary, be offered a medical assessment to detect physical and mental health problems. In the City of Copenhagen, all refugees – regardless of their need(s) – are offered a health assessment to clarify possible health challenges. The Immigrant Medical Clinic [Indvandrermedicinsk Klinik] performs the health assessments, and subsequently refer refugees for the relevant, available treatment options. The Immigrant Medical Clinic is specialised in the health challenges that newly arrived refugees may have.

## **Holistic mentoring for all refugees**

The City of Copenhagen offers all refugees a holistic mentor who follows the individual refugees in their first year in Copenhagen. The holistic mentors help refugees with various practical challenges, such as creating a NEM ID, travel card, etc. However, the mentors also support refugees in other areas where needed. A mentor can, e.g. accompany the refugee to work on the first day, if desired. The help that holistic mentors can provide makes it easier for refugees to start a new life in Copenhagen.



## **Goals**

The City of Copenhagen has chosen a model with systematic goal achievement of the results attained for the group. This means that the municipality monitors the refugees closely to ensure successful integration, i.a., through employment and education. Specifically, the systematic achievement of goals means that the City of Copenhagen continuously monitors how the municipality's refugees relate to jobs, education and IGU.



### **Goal of max. 6 months in temporary accommodation**

According to the Integration Act, refugees must be offered permanent housing, when possible. A safe and good physical environment is important for refugees to settle down and become part of a new society. The City of Copenhagen has therefore set a goal that there must be a maximum of 6 months from a refugee being ready to relocate, until the person receives an offer for permanent housing. The security that permanent housing offers is crucial for the refugees' approach to possible challenges regarding employment, education, school and daycare. Having their own housing is also important for the individual refugee to feel like they are an equal part of the community and like a full-fledged citizen in society. Refugees are offered housing in all parts of Copenhagen – except for vulnerable urban areas – which helps ensure successful integration, but also ensures diversity in the city.

### **Welcome House – venue for refugees, volunteers and civil society organisations**

As part of the Copenhagen model, the City of Copenhagen opened a welcome house in May 2016 aimed at newly arrived refugees and family unified refugees – called Welcome House. At Welcome House, refugees, Copenhagener volunteers and civil society organisations can meet and create relationships. The purpose of a welcome home is primarily to provide refugees with a much needed respite from everyday life, and to be a haven where users come by their own desire and

participate to the extent they have the energy to. Welcome House is a unique venue with more than 100 active volunteers and more than 9 out of 10 Copenhagen refugees use Welcome House. At Welcome House, refugees and volunteers jointly organise a variety of activities, such as a bicycle works-hop, cafe, recycling shop, theme nights, lectures, language café and more. The City of Copenhagen has prepared a booklet with recommendations for how other municipalities can be inspired by Welcome House's experiences.

The booklet can be found [here](#)

### **Offer to be matched with a Copenhagener volunteer**

The City of Copenhagen has entered into an agreement with external suppliers to match refugees with volunteers. The City of Copenhagen has entered into agreements for 2017 and 2018 with the Danish Refugee Council, the Association of New Danes, Neighbourhood Mothers and the Red Cross. Being matched with a Copenhagener volunteer is an informal way in which refugees can meet other Danes, socialise and learn about what it means to live in Denmark. Volunteers can help and support refugees by making their own experiences, knowledge and resources available to the individual refugee or family. A match is often a mutually rewarding relationship. Volunteers help refugees, but the volunteers also get something in return – and generally, it benefits citizenship and inclusion in Copenhagen.