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# Living and Working in France

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# | Living and Working in France as a Refugee

## Practical guide to community support, courses and everyday integration

France has been a major destination for people seeking protection for many decades, and in recent years the number of asylum seekers arriving from Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe has continued to grow. Refugees bring a wide range of backgrounds, languages and skills, and France offers a substantial support system to help them settle. Alongside the national reception scheme, there is a strong network of NGOs, charities, integration centres, social workers, faith organisations and local community groups. These services help newcomers understand the asylum process, access healthcare, learn French, find work and manage everyday tasks.

At the same time, the first months in France can feel complicated. Administrative procedures can be lengthy, regional services differ from one department to another, and the language barrier often affects daily life. The housing market is competitive in many cities, and some support programmes require formal registration before help can begin. Because of this, knowing where to find clear, practical information becomes essential for building stability and reducing stress.

This guide focuses on the parts of everyday life that refugees most often need help with: finding supportive community groups, enrolling in courses, accessing mental-health services, understanding housing options and navigating key public systems. It does not repeat legal entitlements but instead highlights practical routes for getting settled, meeting people and gaining confidence. Whether someone is living in a large city such as Paris, Lyon or Marseille, or in a smaller town or rural area, this guide is designed to be a reliable starting point for life and work in France, offering realistic information and signposting to trusted organisations.

01

# Community Groups and Integration Centres



## | Community Groups and Integration Centres

France's support system for refugees is organised through a combination of national NGOs, the state-run reception network, local authorities and community organisations. Many newcomers first access support through dedicated reception centres or social workers, but there is also a wide range of community hubs that offer language practice, cultural orientation, emotional support and everyday guidance. Because services differ by region, it is useful to know which organisations operate nationally and which are specific to certain cities.

Below is an overview of the main organisations that provide reliable support across France.

### National-level NGOs with physical centres

These organisations work across multiple regions and play a central role in supporting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants through both the official reception system and wider community programmes.

#### France Terre d'Asile (FTDA)

Website: <https://www.france-terre-asile.org>

Cities: Paris, Lille, Rouen, Caen, Tours, Nice and others

France Terre d'Asile is one of the best-known refugee organisations in the country and assists people from the early stages of the asylum process through to long-term integration.

#### What they offer

- Legal advice and guidance on asylum procedures
- Support in completing applications and preparing interviews
- Accommodation through the national reception system (when eligible)
- Social workers providing help with healthcare, schools and benefits
- French language courses and civic-orientation sessions
- Workshops on employment and everyday life in France
- Activities for families, young people and vulnerable individuals

#### Why it's useful

FTDA combines administrative guidance with hands-on support, helping newcomers navigate both formal and informal aspects of life in France.

#### Forum Réfugiés – Cosi

Website: <https://forumrefugies.org>

Cities: Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand, Grenoble, Nice, Paris region and others

Forum Réfugiés supports asylum seekers and refugees through reception centres, legal services and integration programmes.

#### What they offer

- Legal counselling and help preparing asylum claims
- Accommodation centres and transitional housing
- Social support for healthcare, education and daily tasks
- French classes and integration workshops
- Job-readiness support and employability sessions
- Activities for children and young people

#### Good for

People needing consistent, structured support as they move through the asylum process into independent living.

#### La Cimade

Website: <https://www.lacimade.org>

Cities: Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Bordeaux and others

La Cimade focuses on defending the rights of migrants and refugees.

#### **What they offer**

- Legal consultations and help with appeals
- Administrative support for residence permits and access to services
- Orientation sessions explaining French institutions
- Community groups and solidarity events
- Accompaniment to key appointments when needed

#### **Why it matters**

La Cimade is particularly helpful for people facing complex administrative cases.

#### **Croix Rouge Française (French Red Cross)**

Website: <https://www.croix-rouge.fr>

Cities: Nationwide

The Red Cross provides extensive support to asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants across France.

#### **They offer**

- Emergency accommodation
- Social and psychological support
- French language tutoring
- Help accessing healthcare and benefits
- Activities for families, children and older people
- Food distribution and essential goods

#### **Secours Catholique – Caritas France**

Website: <https://www.secours-catholique.org>

Cities: Nationwide

A well-established charity offering local, community-focused support.

#### **What they offer**

- Food and clothing support
- Social and emotional assistance
- Drop-in centres with conversation groups
- French language practice
- Help with administrative letters and appointments
- Community meals and local integration events

#### **Why it's useful**

Its local presence makes it a friendly and accessible option for newcomers in smaller towns.

## **Local community hubs (city-based)**

Alongside national NGOs, many cities in France run their own reception and integration services. These centres often help with everyday challenges and create spaces where newcomers can build connections.

#### **Paris – CAIR (Centres d'Action et d'Information pour les Réfugiés)**

City: Paris

#### **What they offer**

- Orientation for new arrivals
- Help with online procedures and local services
- French language workshops
- Support for housing applications

- Community activities and intercultural events
- Information on employment programmes across the Paris region

### **Paris – Les Amarres and Le Bar Commun (Community cafés)**

Community-run spaces offering:

- Affordable meals
- Social activities and conversation groups
- Workshops, events and volunteer opportunities
- A friendly environment for meeting people

These centres are not formal “refugee services” but play an important role in reducing isolation.

### **Lyon – Accueil Réfugiés et Migrants (ARM)**

City: Lyon

#### **What they offer**

- Support with healthcare, education and administration
- French conversation groups
- Homework support for children
- Cultural workshops and neighbourhood events
- Referral to specialised services if needed

### **Marseille – Centre d’Accueil de Jour and Local Associations**

City: Marseille

Marseille has an active network of organisations that work together to support newcomers.

#### **Services include**

- Daily drop-in centres with basic assistance
- French lessons and conversation clubs
- Help with job-searching
- Women’s groups and youth activities
- Legal support via local partners

### **Bordeaux – Le Collectif Bienvenue**

City: Bordeaux

#### **What they offer**

- French language classes for beginners
- Administrative support
- Community events, shared meals and volunteer activities
- Help navigating healthcare and education systems

## Neighbourhood associations and grassroots groups

Across France, local associations provide informal but essential support, especially for social integration.

### Typical activities

- Conversation cafés and language exchanges
- Small workshops on everyday life (budgeting, public transport, appointments)
- Cultural events and cooking sessions
- Homework support for children
- Women's circles and parent groups

### Why they matter

These groups help people feel part of their neighbourhood and offer low-pressure spaces to build confidence and practise French.

02

# Courses and Training Options for Refugees in France



## | Courses and Training Options for Refugees in France

Refugees in France can access a wide range of free or subsidised courses, from French-language learning and digital skills to vocational training in fields such as caregiving, construction, hospitality and transport. Training is delivered by national NGOs, municipal services, state-run integration programmes, public education centres and community organisations. Some programmes also include childcare, travel subsidies or personalised coaching.

This section outlines the most accessible routes for refugees to gain new skills, prepare for employment and build confidence for everyday life.

### A. French-language courses (free or low-cost)

French is essential for administration, employment and integration. Refugees can access courses through the national integration contract, NGOs, local councils and community groups.

#### 1. OFII – Contrat d’Intégration Républicaine (CIR)

Website: <https://www.ofii.fr>

The French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) provides language training to newly recognised refugees and asylum seekers who receive protection.

##### What they offer

- Free French classes (100–600 hours depending on assessed level)
- Civic education days explaining rights, duties and daily life in France
- French for everyday situations and work purposes
- Monitoring and certification at the end of the programme

##### Why it’s useful

It is an official programme with structured pathways that help build language skills quickly.

#### 2. Municipal French courses (Mairies / Centres Sociaux)

Local councils run French courses through community centres, libraries and social centres.

##### Typical features

- Beginner and intermediate French
- Conversation workshops
- Women-only classes in some areas
- Parent-friendly groups during school hours
- No cost or very low cost

Available in cities such as Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, Lille, Toulouse and Nantes.

#### 3. NGO-based French lessons

Offered by France Terre d’Asile, Forum Réfugiés, Secours Catholique, Red Cross, La Cimade, Centres Sociaux and local charities.

##### What they offer

- Small-group lessons from A1 to B1
- Conversation cafés and informal practice sessions
- Literacy classes for people with limited schooling
- Cultural orientation and practical vocabulary
- Flexible timetables suitable for those with childcare responsibilities

##### Who it suits

People who prefer a supportive, community-based environment rather than formal classrooms.

#### 4. Volunteer-led language exchanges

Libraries, neighbourhood associations and universities often host free language practice groups.

##### Activities include

- Conversation circles
- Intercultural meet-ups
- Reading groups
- Pronunciation workshops

These activities help build confidence while reducing social isolation.

## B. Digital skills and employment preparation

Digital competence is increasingly important in the French labour market. Many refugees start with basic computer skills and move towards specialised training.

### 1. Pôle Emploi / France Travail

Website: <https://www.francetravail.fr>

France's national employment service provides job-search support and training.

##### Courses include

- Basic IT and digital literacy
- CV and cover-letter writing
- Preparing for interviews
- Using online platforms to search for work
- Job-matching services and coaching
- Workplace rights and safety information

##### Good to know

Registering with France Travail gives access to a wide range of state-funded training.

### 2. Emmaüs Connect

Website: <https://emmaus-connect.org>

Emmaüs Connect helps people gain essential digital skills for daily life.

##### What they offer

- Smartphone and computer basics
- Using email, online tools and social services
- Access to affordable devices
- One-to-one support for people unfamiliar with digital platforms

### 3. Simplon.co

Website: <https://simplon.co>

A non-profit digital training organisation.

##### Courses include

- Coding and web development

- Digital workplace skills
- IT support technician pathways
- Preparation for entry-level technical roles

Some programmes specifically target refugees and newcomers.

#### 4. Local and regional initiatives

Cities such as Paris, Lyon and Marseille often run digital workshops through:

- Community centres
- Media labs
- Youth centres
- Adult-education units (GRETA)

These are often free and designed for beginners.

## C. Vocational courses (construction, care work, logistics, hospitality)

France has a strong vocational training system that refugees can access once they have the right to work. Training is offered through France Travail, regional councils, NGOs and accredited training centres.

### 1. GRETA – Public adult-education centres

Website: <https://education.gouv.fr> (regional pages)

GRETA centres offer professional courses in many sectors.

#### Typical courses

- Carpentry, plumbing and electrical basics
- Building maintenance and construction skills
- Catering, kitchen assistant and restaurant service
- Cleaning and hygiene
- Warehouse operations and forklift training
- Caregiving and home assistance roles
- Administrative and customer-service roles

#### Why it's useful

GRETA qualifications are nationally recognised and widely accepted by employers.

### 2. AFPA – National Agency for Adult Vocational Training

Website: <https://www.afpa.fr>

AFPA provides practical, job-focused training.

#### Courses include

- Heavy machinery and construction
- Logistics and transport
- Metalwork and welding

- Hotel reception and restaurant work
- Elderly care (a sector with high demand)

Some centres offer tailored courses for refugees.

### 3. NGO-linked professional training

Provided by France Terre d'Asile, Red Cross, Secours Catholique and local associations.

#### Examples

- Introduction to construction tools and techniques
- Hospitality basics (kitchen and housekeeping)
- Retail and supermarket assistant programmes
- Care assistant preparation
- Textile workshops or sewing classes
- Support to obtain food-handling certificates

These courses often combine practical training with language learning.

### 4. Apprenticeships (Apprentissage)

Refugees with French language basics may be eligible for paid apprenticeships.

#### Available in

- Construction
- Mechanics
- Hospitality
- Hairdressing
- Logistics
- Retail
- Catering

Apprenticeships blend classroom learning with paid work experience, making them a strong route to long-term employment.

## D. Recognition and upgrading of qualifications

Refugees who previously worked in skilled professions may need to have their qualifications officially recognised.

### 1. Enic-Naric France – Recognition of foreign diplomas

Website: <https://www.france-education-international.fr>

#### They offer

- Evaluation of foreign degrees
- Attestations of comparability for academic or professional use

- Guidance on regulated professions such as medicine or engineering

**Important**

Processing times can be long, so starting early is recommended.

**2. Validation of Prior Experience (VAE – Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience)**

A formal system allowing people to validate previous work experience.

**Benefits**

- Gain an official French qualification based on your experience
- Access higher-level training
- Improve job opportunities

VAE is particularly useful for people whose documents are incomplete or lost.

03

# Mental-health and Wellbeing Support



## | Mental Health Support and Wellbeing

Adjusting to life in France can be demanding. Refugees often deal with the strain of the asylum process, uncertainty about the future, financial pressure, language barriers and separation from family. These challenges can affect emotional wellbeing. France has a well-developed network of organisations offering psychological support, counselling, crisis assistance, and community-based wellbeing activities for adults, families and young people.

This section outlines where to find help, how to access services without strong French, and what support is available across the country.

### A. Main NGOs providing mental-health support

The organisations below offer free or low-cost emotional and psychological support for refugees. Services are available in French and, depending on staff, also in English, Arabic, Dari, Pashto, Tigrinya and other languages.

#### France Terre d'Asile (FTDA) – Psychosocial Support

Website: <https://www.france-terre-asile.org>

Cities: Multiple regions

FTDA integrates mental-health services into its wider refugee-support programmes.

What they offer

- Individual counselling with trained psychologists
- Support for people who have experienced trauma, violence or displacement
- Group sessions on stress, resilience and coping with uncertainty
- Parenting support and guidance for families
- Social workers who help with housing, health appointments and everyday challenges
- Referrals to specialist mental-health services when required

Who it suits

Adults and families needing structured support from professionals experienced in refugee wellbeing.

#### Forum Réfugiés – Cosi

Website: <https://forumrefugies.org>

Cities: Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand, Grenoble, Nice and others

Forum Réfugiés provides both emotional and practical support for people in the asylum process.

What they offer

- Psychological assessments and counselling
- Crisis support for people dealing with serious distress
- Support groups and wellbeing workshops
- Activities for children and young people
- Guidance in navigating the health system and specialist services

#### Croix Rouge Française (French Red Cross)

Website: <https://www.croix-rouge.fr>

Cities: Nationwide

The French Red Cross includes mental-health support as part of its reception and integration network.

They provide

- Psychological first aid for newly arrived asylum seekers
- Counselling sessions in reception centres
- Community wellbeing activities (art, movement, relaxation)
- Support for survivors of exploitation or trafficking
- Emotional support for children and young people

Why it's useful

It has a widespread presence across France and reaches people in both larger cities and smaller towns.

## **Secours Catholique – Caritas France**

**Website:** <https://www.secours-catholique.org>

Cities: Nationwide

Secours Catholique provides community-based wellbeing support.

What they offer

- Informal emotional support and active listening
- Women’s groups and parent circles
- Local activities that reduce loneliness
- Help with administrative stress and daily challenges
- Referrals to psychologists or social services when needed

## **Médecins du Monde**

**Website:** <https://www.medecinsdumonde.org>

Cities: Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Nantes, Strasbourg and others

An important provider for people who face difficulties accessing the public health system.

They offer

- Psychological consultations
- Medical and social support for vulnerable migrants
- Crisis and trauma care in certain locations
- Help navigating healthcare and emergency services

## **B. Mental-health support for children and young people**

Children and teenagers may struggle with school transitions, language barriers and the stress of displacement. France provides dedicated child and adolescent support through both the public health system and NGOs.

### **1. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Centres (CMP / CMPP)**

Public clinics offering free psychological support.

**Services include**

- Psychological assessments
- Counselling and therapy
- Speech and language support
- Family consultations
- Referrals to specialist units where necessary

**Good to know**

Appointments may take time, but referrals can also come from schools or social workers.

### **2. School-based support (Psychologues de l’Éducation Nationale)**

Every public school in France has access to guidance and psychological services.

**What they offer**

- Emotional and behavioural support for pupils
- Help with school adaptation and learning difficulties
- Meetings with parents
- Referral to external mental-health services

Schools often work in partnership with local NGOs for extra support.

### **3. NGO programmes for children and families**

**France Terre d’Asile, Forum Réfugiés, Red Cross and Secours Catholique run:**

- Homework support and after-school clubs
- Social and emotional learning activities
- Art therapy and creative workshops
- Group activities to help children settle into school life
- Parenting workshops for families adapting to new routines

## Why it helps

These programmes build stability and confidence for children navigating new environments.

## C. Crisis support and emergency assistance

For urgent situations involving severe distress, violence or safety concerns, several emergency services are available throughout France.

### 1. Emergency number: 112

For urgent medical, police or fire assistance.

### 2. “15” – Medical emergency hotline

Connects callers to SAMU (medical emergency services), including psychiatric emergencies.

### 3. Domestic violence and abuse helpline: 3919

**Available 24/7, free and confidential.**

Supports people experiencing

- Domestic violence
- Threats or control
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Sexual violence

Interpreting may be available depending on the call centre.

### 4. Social Emergency Samu Social (115)

A nationwide service providing:

- Emergency shelter
- Immediate assistance for people on the street
- Crisis intervention for vulnerable individuals
- Night buses (“maraudes”) offering food, blankets and basic support

Useful for

People facing homelessness or immediate danger.

### 5. Hospital psychiatric emergency units

Most hospitals have emergency psychiatric departments.

They provide

- Immediate assessment
- Crisis support
- Short-term care
- Follow-up referrals to community services

Anyone can go directly to a hospital emergency room (Urgences) if they feel unsafe.

## D. Community-based wellbeing activities

Many people benefit from regular social contact, creative activities and community events. These activities help build routine, reduce isolation and support emotional wellbeing.

### 1. Conversation groups and community cafés

Offered by Secours Catholique, Red Cross, Centres Sociaux, community cafés and volunteer groups.

**Activities include**

- Conversation circles
- Shared meals
- Cultural outings
- Walking groups
- Informal gatherings that encourage social connection

## **2. Women's groups and family circles**

Run by NGOs and community centres.

### **They offer**

- Safe spaces to discuss challenges
- Parenting workshops
- Creative activities such as sewing, art and cooking
- Peer support networks for women

## **3. Art, sport and creative wellbeing programmes**

Available in community centres, cultural houses and youth organisations.

### **Examples**

- Art therapy
- Music and movement sessions
- Photography and storytelling workshops
- Yoga or gentle exercise groups
- Sports and outdoor activities for young people

These are particularly helpful for people who find formal therapy unfamiliar or difficult.

## **4. Faith-based and cultural associations**

Churches, mosques, temples and cultural groups often support newcomers informally.

### **Typical support**

- Emotional support from community leaders
- Peer groups in familiar languages
- Family events and cultural celebrations
- Practical help with daily tasks

04

# Housing and Everyday Practical Guidance



## | Housing and Everyday Practical Guidance

Finding stable housing and navigating everyday systems can be challenging for refugees in France. The housing market is competitive in many areas, administrative processes can be slow, and social services vary between regions. Understanding where to get help and how to manage key everyday tasks can make the first months in France far easier. This section outlines the most common sources of housing support along with practical guidance on healthcare, transport, banking, education and other essentials.

### Housing Support

Housing for refugees in France is largely based on two systems:

1. **The national reception scheme**, managed by OFII and NGOs, which provides temporary accommodation for eligible asylum seekers and recognised refugees.
2. **The private rental market**, where most people eventually seek long-term housing.

NGOs, social workers and municipal services play a central role in supporting refugees as they move from temporary centres into independent accommodation.

#### OFII – National Reception System

Website: <https://www.ofii.fr>

OFII coordinates accommodation for asylum seekers and newly recognised refugees through centres across the country.

##### What they offer

- Temporary housing in reception centres (CADA, HUDA, PRAHDA)
- Social support, including help with healthcare and appointments
- Assistance in finding long-term accommodation when leaving the system
- Guidance on administrative procedures related to housing

##### Why it's important

It is often the first point of housing support for asylum seekers in France.

#### France Terre d'Asile (FTDA)

Website: <https://www.france-terre-asile.org>

Cities: Multiple regions

FTDA manages several accommodation and integration centres.

##### They offer

- Temporary housing in dedicated facilities
- Help searching for private rentals
- Support with rental applications and explaining administrative requirements
- Mediation between tenants and landlords when issues arise
- Assistance with housing subsidies and social housing applications

#### Forum Réfugiés – Cosi

Website: <https://forumrefugies.org>

Cities: Southeastern and central France

Forum Réfugiés operates housing centres and supports people moving into private accommodation.

##### Support includes

- Temporary places in reception centres or transitional housing
- Help understanding rental contracts
- Guidance on managing utilities (electricity, gas, internet)
- Support with address registration and housing benefits
- Advice on budgeting for rent and bills

#### Croix Rouge Française (Red Cross)

Website: <https://www.croix-rouge.fr>

Cities: Nationwide

The Red Cross provides emergency accommodation and integration support.

#### **What they offer**

- Emergency shelter for vulnerable individuals
- Help finding short-term or transitional housing
- Administrative support for rental applications
- Practical workshops on tenant rights

#### **Secours Catholique – Caritas France**

Website: <https://www.secours-catholique.org>

Cities: Nationwide

Secours Catholique offers informal and community-based support.

#### **They provide**

- Help searching for affordable housing
- Assistance reading and understanding rental contracts
- Referrals to shelters or social housing services
- Local support networks for people facing housing stress

#### **Municipal Social Services (Centres Communaux d'Action Sociale – CCAS)**

Available in all towns and cities

#### **Services include**

- Information on emergency housing
- Support with social housing applications (HLM)
- Access to financial assistance for electricity, transport or essential goods
- Appointments with social workers who can assist with forms and procedures

#### **Searching for rentals online**

France's private rental market is competitive, especially in cities such as Paris, Lyon and Nice. The following websites are commonly used:

- <https://www.leboncoin.fr>
- <https://www.seloger.com>
- <https://www.pap.fr>
- <https://www.fnaim.fr> (estate agents)
- <https://www.locservice.fr>

#### **Safe searching tips**

- Avoid paying deposits before visiting the property
- Ensure contracts are written and signed by both parties
- Be cautious of offers that appear too cheap
- Ask for clarification about charges (utilities, building fees, taxes)
- Bring a support worker or volunteer to review contracts if unsure

## **Understanding Rental Agreements (Bail de Location)**

A standard French rental contract includes:

- Names and IDs of both landlord and tenant
- Address and type of property
- Rent amount and due date
- Deposit (usually one month's rent)
- Charges (maintenance fees, utilities, waste tax)
- Insurance requirements
- Duration of the rental (often three years for unfurnished, one year for furnished)
- Inventory of fixtures (état des lieux)

#### **Important**

Renters must take out home insurance (*assurance habitation*) before moving in.

#### **Housing Subsidies and Social Housing**

## CAF – Caisse d’Allocations Familiales

Website: <https://www.caf.fr>

CAF provides housing allowances such as:

- **APL** – Aide Personnalisée au Logement
- **ALS / ALF** – other types of housing support depending on the situation

These subsidies can significantly reduce monthly rent. Applications are done online and can be supported by social workers or NGOs.

## HLM – Social Housing

Social housing exists across France but waiting lists can be long.

### To apply

- Submit a form (dossier logement social) via your local mairie or online
- Renew the request each year until a home is offered
- Provide necessary documents (ID, residence permit, income details)

Social workers often help with this process.

## Everyday Practical Guidance

Understanding daily systems is essential for reducing stress and becoming independent.

### 1. Healthcare

France has a strong public healthcare system (*Assurance Maladie*). Refugees are generally eligible for coverage.

#### Steps to access care

- Register for health insurance via CPAM (Caisse Primaire d’Assurance Maladie)
- Apply for a health card (*carte Vitale*)
- Choose a general practitioner (*médecin traitant*)

#### Emergency services

- **112** – general emergency number
- **15** – medical emergencies (SAMU)

#### Language support

NGOs often accompany people to appointments if interpreting is needed.

### 2. Public Transport

Major cities have extensive transport networks.

#### Examples

- **Paris:** RER, Metro, buses, trams (Navigo pass)
- **Lyon:** TCL network
- **Marseille:** RTM network
- **Toulouse:** Tisséo
- **Lille:** Ilévia

Monthly travel passes are cheaper than single tickets, and some regions offer reduced fares for low-income travellers.

### 3. Opening a Bank Account

Common banks include:

- Crédit Agricole
- BNP Paribas
- Société Générale
- La Banque Postale
- Crédit Mutuel

#### Documents often required

- Passport or residence permit
- Proof of address (attestation d’hébergement or utility bill)
- Phone number
- Sometimes proof of income or CAF benefits

Many banks offer basic “right to an account” services if opening an account is difficult.

#### 4. Mobile Phones and Internet

Main providers:

- Orange
- SFR
- Bouygues Telecom
- Free Mobile

Prepaid SIM cards are easy to purchase, and low-cost monthly plans are widely available.

#### 5. Food, Essentials and Budget Shopping

Affordable supermarkets include:

- Lidl
- Aldi
- Carrefour
- Auchan
- Intermarché
- Leclerc

Community organisations often distribute food parcels for families in need.

##### Second-hand options

- Emmaüs shops
- Le Bon Coin
- Local recycling centres (ressourceries)

#### 6. Education and Schools

Public education is free.

##### To enrol a child

- Contact the local mairie
- Provide ID and vaccination records
- Complete the registration for the appropriate school
- Children may receive additional French-language support (UPE2A units)

Schools also provide meals and after-school childcare (at extra cost but often subsidised).

#### 7. Everyday Administration

Key offices include:

- **Mairie (Town Hall)** – address registration, school enrolment, social services
- **Préfecture / Sous-Préfecture** – residence permits and asylum procedures
- **CAF** – family allowances and housing support
- **CPAM** – healthcare registrations
- **France Travail (formerly Pôle Emploi)** – employment services
- **CCAS** – municipal social assistance

NGOs can help with:

- Completing forms
- Booking appointments
- Understanding online platforms
- Preparing documents for administrative procedures

#### Practical tips from newcomer experiences

- Always keep copies of contracts, receipts and official letters
- Do not hesitate to ask for support with online forms and appointments
- Attend local community events to build a social network
- Learn simple French phrases early — they make daily tasks much easier
- Ask a social worker or NGO to review any document you do not fully understand
- Make use of free services at local libraries and community centres