

DECISION ITEM



REPORT OF		MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE		ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE	10 JANUARY 2017	5
LANCASHIRE SYRIAN REFUGEE FAMILIES AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S AND THEIR FAMILIES RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME				

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

This report updates the Committee with respect to the Asylum Seeker Wider Dispersal programme within Fylde and the requirements across Lancashire authorities for the Syrian Resettlement Programme and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme. The report also details the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children that are protected under the European Legislation Asylum Seekers Regulations 2005.

In 2015 Government made a Commitment to the Syrian Refugee Programme (SRP) to accommodate 20,000 Syrian Refugee families whose claim for Asylum had been taken when outside of the UK, mainly in Syrian Refugee Camps over 5 years from 2015. Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) launched at the same time as the Syrian Refugee Programme to assist vulnerable children and their families displaced in the migrant crisis. Appendix 1 contains Ministerial Statements related to the launch of these programmes.

The Lancashire Chief Executives Group have considered two pledges in relation to the Syrian Resettlement Programme to be considered by each authority:

1. In January 2016: to resettle 500 Syrian Refugee families
2. In September 2016: to resettle 75 refugees (including children and their families) under the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Programme (VCRP)

The model adopted in Lancashire means a certain degree of coordination and commissioning from Lancashire County Council (LCC) who are the lead Authority and will engage directly with the Home Office and the North West Strategic Migration Partnership. All associated funding is received in the first instance by LCC as the upper tier authority. Participating district councils are required to enter into an agreement with LCC regarding the element of the funding that is receivable by the district council to cover the cost of any services delivered at district council level.

Lancashire County Council are now asking each district authority to pledge the number of families they will work to source accommodation under the SRP and VCRP by the end of December 2016. Both resettlement programmes are being treated as one, but local authorities can make pledges against each separate programme if they so wish.

The bulk of resettlement services are to be delivered or commissioned by district/borough councils. Setting up and running a successful resettlement scheme requires careful collaborative planning and great attention to detail.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report regarding the Asylum Seeker Wider Dispersal Programme;
2. Note the contents of the report regarding the Lancashire Syrian Refugee families and Vulnerable Children and their families resettlement programmes;
3. Recommend Fylde Council pledge under the Lancashire Syrian Refugee Families and Vulnerable Children and their Families Resettlement Programmes, to accommodate 5 families in 2019/20;
4. Approve that if such a pledge is agreed that negotiations with LCC may commence to establish how the available funding would be shared between LCC and Fylde Council and how the various services are to be delivered and by which body;
5. Note that a further report will be presented to update the committee on this matter during 2017/18.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Environment Health and Housing Committee - 5th January 2016

Information item: Outline for member's information on the Home Office programme for the procurement of property to accommodate wider asylum dispersal.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	√
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	√
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	√
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	

REPORT

REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND

1. An Asylum Seeker is someone who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country and is waiting for a decision as to whether or not they are a Refugee.
2. A Refugee under the **1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees** is, "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

3. In the UK, a person is officially a Refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government.
4. A Refused Asylum Seeker is a person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection. Some refused Asylum Seekers voluntarily return to their home country, others are forcibly returned and for some it is not safe or practical for them to return until conditions in their country change.
5. An economic migrant is someone who has moved to another country to work. Refugees are not economic migrants.
6. The Home Office is responsible for fulfilling the United Kingdom's obligations under the **1951 United Nations Convention related to the Status of Refugees (the Geneva Convention)** and ensuring that those genuinely fleeing persecution are given the protection they need.
7. To achieve this, UK Visa's and Immigration (UKVI) currently provides a suite of statutory and elective support services for Asylum Seekers, failed Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Asylum Seekers are provided with accommodation, transportation and cash/subsistence, funded by the Home Office, whilst their application for asylum is being considered. All Asylum Seekers can access independent advice and guidance and translation services to ensure they meet the conditions of their temporary admission in the UK.
8. The Home Office provider of accommodation and transport for destitute Asylum Seekers in the North West is Serco. Serco Housing and Welfare officers have safeguarding duties and are in regular contact with clients they accommodate. Serco run an initial accommodation facility in Liverpool.
9. Migrant help, a non-government organisation, deliver independent advice and guidance through a national Asylum help service which includes outreach and community development work in the North West.
10. The North West Strategic Migration Partnership is a partnership that work with national and local government and other public, private and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that the NW can manage and benefit from migration. The purpose of the NWSMP is to provide strategic leadership, co-ordination and advisory function for migration in the North West region.
11. The UK's developing Asylum Seeker and Refugee programmes has meant more local authorities many of whom were not previously involved in resettlement schemes, are now considering participating in Resettlement Schemes.

2015 ASYLUM SEEKER WIDER DISPERSAL PROGRAMME

12. In 2015 Local authorities across the North West were approached by the Home Office and the North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership in relation to the wider dispersal of Asylum Seekers following sharp increases in the number of asylum seekers in the UK and current accommodation provision unable to cope.
13. The government's approach previously has been to work with a number of larger metropolitan local authorities to secure suitable accommodation to procure asylum dispersal accommodation. The North West Strategic Migration Partnership has been leading a consultation with UK Visas and Immigration across Lancashire / Cheshire on agreements to widen asylum dispersal across the region.
14. The provider for the North West, Serco, is required to consult with local authorities on its procurement of dispersal accommodation. Temporary dispersal accommodation and accommodation procured under contingency arrangements fall outside the scope of the requirement to consult.

15. Local authorities have no privity in the contract between the Home Office and Serco, and are under no statutory obligation to co-operate with either the Home Office or Serco. However, they are required to deliver a range of statutory services to asylum seekers, as well as ensuring that community resilience and service delivery is not materially tested.
16. Engagement with the property procurement process of the wider dispersal programme allows local authorities to maintain a degree of influence over asylum dispersal. The influence that the process affords can be used to limit and mitigate the adverse impacts of dispersal, and can ensure that local authorities can extract a benefit where possible (e.g. considerable investment in private rented sector stock, and bringing empty homes back into use).
17. Under the agreed protocol Serco submits a request on a standard pro forma for the relevant local authority to undertake a Post Code Check (PCC) in respect of every property it wishes to procure as dispersed accommodation. Serco employs a dedicated team, whose primary function is to procure properties within the agreed dispersal areas.
18. Serco submits a Post Code Check request by email to a nominated officer in the relevant local authority containing details of the property to be procured.
19. The recipient consults with colleagues within the authority, as established by each local authority. This consultation may involve specialists in:
 - Planning
 - HMO licensing/Environmental Health
 - Social Cohesion
 - Police
 - Housing strategy/private rented sector management.
20. In two tier authorities Serco will contact the upper tier authority in relation to Education and Health Care Services.
21. To date Fylde have dealt with 18 Post Code Checks for properties and one three bedroom property has been secured for Asylum Seeker accommodation in St Annes, accommodating 4 asylum seekers.
22. Serco are restricted to working in areas where there are services and facilities in Fylde. St Annes has been main focus to date.
23. Serco are aiming for 5 properties in Fylde, housing a total of 20 Asylum Seekers. Serco have respected the results from the Post Code Checks and not gone ahead with procurement where the Local Authority via the PCC is not supporting an acquisition.
24. Serco lease the property from the Landlord for a period of 5 years and take on all management and repairing responsibilities. To date their involvement has been restricted to the private rented sector, however Registered Provider accommodation has been used within other Lancashire Authorities.
25. Fylde Borough Council host a Fylde and Wyre Asylum Seeker and Refugee Multi Agency Forum with Serco, Fylde and Wyre Councils, Police and Charities that provide support (Methodist Church, YMCA, Red Cross, CVSBWF). The purpose of the forum is to share relevant information regarding Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Fylde and Wyre and to update on progress and emerging issues related to the wider dispersal programme.
26. Once an Asylum Seeker achieves Refugee status they have a right to remain in the UK. At this point they will receive 28 days notice to leave their current accommodation provided by Serco and be entitled to approach the local housing authority for homelessness and housing advice.

SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME (SRP) and VULNERABLE CHILDREN RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (VCRS)

27. In 2015 Government made a Commitment to the Syrian Refugee Programme (SRP) to accommodate 20,000 Syrian Refugees whose claim for Asylum had been taken when outside of the UK, mainly in Syrian Refugee Camps, over 5 years from 2015.
28. Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) launched at the same time as the Syrian Refugee Programme to assist vulnerable children and their families displaced in the migrant crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – United Nations Programme for Refugees identified the most vulnerable children and their families at risk of child labour, forced marriage, child carers and at risk of abuse and exploitation outside of the UK.
29. The Syrian Resettlement Programme and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme are separate to the Asylum Seeker Wider Dispersal Programme and would not be managed by Serco, but the Upper Tier or Unitary Authority would become the Lead Authority with the Lower Tier responsible for implementing the programme at a local level in two tier authority areas.
30. Resettlement is a formal process of moving refugees from one host country to another where they can settle permanently. Resettlement is known as one of the three 'durable solutions' used by the UNHCR. The process is intended to be used in circumstances where refugees cannot go home (repatriate) and cannot stay in the place they are currently living (local integration), because there is a threat to their safety or they have medical needs that cannot be met.
31. A number of countries around the world operate resettlement programmes, with the USA, Canada and Australia offering the most places. The UK has participated in formal resettlement schemes since 2004. In 2015, 1,864 individuals were resettled in the UK under Resettlement Schemes.
32. The UK's developing SRP and VCRS has meant more local authorities many of whom were not previously involved in any resettlement schemes, are now considering participating in Resettlement Schemes.
33. The Lancashire Chief Executives Group have considered two pledges under the Syrian Resettlement Programme to be considered by each Authority's political process:
 - In January 2016, to resettle 500 Syrian Refugee families
 - In September 2016, to resettle 75 refugees (including children and their families) under the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Programme (VCRP)
34. The model adopted in Lancashire means a certain degree of coordination and commissioning from Lancashire County Council who are the Lead Authority and will engage directly with the Home Office and the North West Strategic Migration Partnership.
35. Lancashire County Council is now asking Lancashire authorities to pledge the number of families they will work to source accommodation under the SRP and VCRP by the end of December 2016 in line with the discussions at the Chief Executive Officers' Group earlier in 2016. Both Resettlement programmes are being treated as one, but local authorities can make pledges against each separate programme if they so wish.
36. The bulk of resettlement services are to be delivered or commissioned by district/borough councils. Setting up and running a successful resettlement scheme requires careful collaborative planning and great attention to detail.
37. There is a degree of flexibility in terms of how many families Lancashire can accept in a given year and exactly when they will arrive; however, the flexibility is limited by the capacity of the Home Office to make referrals and by the need to co-ordinate arrivals with other sub-regions in

the North West, in terms of charter flights. Local authorities will also be assigned a peer authority to work with who have already gone through the process.

38. The first year of the programme in Lancashire has seen 30 families resettled;

1. Blackpool – 10 properties
2. Pendle – 10 properties
3. Preston – 5 properties
4. South Ribble – 5 properties

39. The Resettlement is split into 5 separate stages. A guide has been produced by the LGA for local authorities regarding the Syrian Refugee Resettlement and a link is available at the end of this report. This would be the responsibility of the local authority with support from Lancashire County Council.

1. Pre-arrival planning – In partnership with a working group and delivery partners the local authority will be responsible to ensure all aspects of the pre-arrival preparation are thought through and services ready. This includes securing and furnishing appropriate property, finding school and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) places, arranging integration support casework, confirming access to health provision and interpreters.
2. Arrival and first week – Meet and greet at the airport, organise initial reception and transport to allocated properties, timetable for the first week with actions that need to be completed with new arrivals to ensure their basic needs are met.
3. Ongoing support – When needed but Refugees independence is encouraged from the start. Principals of support delivery and types of activities proposed are in line with integration practices currently adopted by leading refugee organisations.
4. Local community engagement – Informing and preparing the local community for the arrival of refugees to ensure the wider community is engaged and has a positive experience of resettlement. This will include engaging with the media, local residents, third-sector organisations to maintain community cohesion. The local authority may need to consider how they will handle donations.
5. Cultural Considerations – Syrian Refugees will not know much about the UK culture and authorities will need to be able to anticipate important differences or misunderstandings might occur, from religion and ethnicity to food and drink, naming conventions, marriage, and child safeguarding, to gender, mental health, smoking and littering.

40. The Funding Instruction (FI) from the Home Office has all the required information on how the SRP is financed. Once a pledge has been made Lancashire County Council will start to work with the partnership of local authorities taking Syrian Refugees in that year. All costs will be paid for under the FI for 12 months and include staff time, up to 8 weeks void period for sourced properties, furniture and transportation costs, funding for commissioned and in-house services.

41. Additional funding is available to support resettled Refugees beyond their first year giving local authorities the opportunity to plan strategically for the longer term inclusion of Syrian Refugees in their local communities though Years 2 and 3 and exit from the SRP and VCRP. This could include improving language skills before supporting them into employment.

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING AND REFUGEE CHILDREN

42. In September 2016 Government wrote to all Local Council Leads requesting assistance with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee children. In two tier authority areas this would be the responsibility of Lancashire County Council Children's Social Services. The European

Legislation Asylum Seekers (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2005 protects the best interest of the child and places a duty on the Home Office to endeavour to trace the families of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The Dublin Regulation is directly effective in UK law and states that the Member State in which an unaccompanied child has lodged an application for asylum must, as soon as possible, take appropriate action to identify the family members in the territory of all Member States, whilst protecting the best interests of the child. 2009 and is how the UK gives effect to the UNCRC in immigration matters that affect children.

43. The Children would then be covered under the Children Act 1989 where Local Authorities in England and Wales have a duty under sections 17 and 20 of the Children Act 1989 to provide support for children in need. This will include unaccompanied asylum seeking children if they meet the relevant statutory criteria. Section 17 places a general duty on every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need within their area by providing services appropriate to those children's needs. Section 20 requires every local authority to provide accommodation for children if:

- There is no person who has parental responsibility for them
- They have been lost or abandoned
- The person who has been caring for them has not been able to provide them with suitable accommodation

44. Fylde Council have been approached regarding vacancies in young persons' provision within Fylde, funded under Supported People Funding. There is currently only Harbour House, managed by the YMCA for 16-25 year olds which has no vacancies and a waiting list.

MANAGING SYRIAN REFUGEE AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN RESETTLEMENT SCHEME IN FYLDE

45. Fylde Council is asked to pledge the number of Syrian Refugee families they will be accommodating and in which year of the five year programme. The programme began in 2015/16. The maximum number would be 10 families. In Blackpool the 10 families they have accommodated equated to 53 persons in total.

Year 1 – 2016/17

Year 2 – 2017/18

Year 3 – 2018/19

Year 4 – 2019/20

46. Once a pledge has been agreed Fylde Council can begin to work with Lancashire County Council to draw down resources to enable the authority to fulfil the pledge. Funding is based on how each individual authority wishes to manage the programme in their areas.

47. Local Authorities are expected to take the lead on managing the resettlement within their areas. This will involve pulling all the lead agencies together to take the project forward. Partners include Education, Health, Housing, Police, DWP and third sector support agencies.

48. Funding is based on amounts provided by the Home Office. In year 1 this will be £8,250 per person regardless of age, in year 2 this reduces to £5,000 and then reduces further over years 3 and 4 with year 5 funding expected to be £1,000. Funding reflects that in Year 1 intensive support is provided which then over the 5 years of the project diminishes. All associated funding is received in the first instance by LCC as the upper tier authority. Participating district councils are required to enter into an agreement with LCC regarding the element of the funding that is receivable by the district council to cover the cost of any services delivered at district council level.

49. The intention initially would be source accommodation within the private rented sector as demand for three bedroom social landlord accommodation is significant in Fylde. If this proves

difficult they may be a need to split accommodation sourced between the social and private sectors. It is envisaged all accommodation will be sourced within a similar area.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	<p>This report provides information to the Committee in respect of the Asylum Seeker Wider Dispersal Programme and the Lancashire Syrian Refugee families and Vulnerable Children and their Families resettlement programmes. The report recommends Fylde Council pledge under the Lancashire Syrian Refugee Families and Vulnerable Children and their Families Resettlement Programmes, to accommodate 5 families in 2019/20; and to approve that if such a pledge is agreed that negotiations with Lancashire County Council (LCC) may commence to establish how the available funding would be shared between LCC and Fylde Council and how the various services are to be delivered and by which body.</p> <p>Note: Funding rates per person are set by the Home Office with diminishing amounts from £8,250 per person in year one to £1,000 in year five. All funding would be received in the first instance by LCC as the upper tier authority.</p>
Legal	Partnering arrangement with LCC under the programme.
Community Safety	Police attend the Fylde and Wyre Refugee and Asylum Seeking Forum where support and emerging issues are discussed.
Human Rights and Equalities	Commitment to the wider Syrian Refugee and Vulnerable Children Programmes.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	
Health & Safety and Risk Management	

LEAD AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Kirstine Riding	01253 658569	01/11/2016	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Refugees and Unaccompanied Children		http://www.local.gov.uk/refugees
North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership		http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/regionalnetworks/Pages/default.aspx
LGA Syrian Refugee Resettlement. A Guide for Local Authorities		http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/1.11_resettlement_guide_08.pdf/cc6c7b51-23a8-4621-b95c-a30bc3da438e

Attached Documents

Appendix 1 - Oral statement by the Home Secretary on Syrian Refugees 29/01/2014

Appendix 1

Oral statement by the Home Secretary on Syrian Refugees 29/01/2014

This is the UK's largest ever response to a humanitarian crisis, and it comes on top of our efforts to secure humanitarian access inside Syria and to provide essential materials such as shelter, blankets and stoves to help vulnerable Syrians to survive the winter.

Mr Speaker, the greatest need is in the region and it is there that the United Kingdom can make the largest impact. As the Prime Minister made clear last week, our country has a proud tradition of providing protection to those in need, and where there are particularly difficult cases of vulnerable refugees who are at grave risk, we are ready to look at those cases.

Following consultations with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee's office in London in recent days, I can tell the House that the Government will be launching a new programme to provide emergency sanctuary in the UK for displaced Syrians who are particularly vulnerable.

David Cameron, Prime Minister Statement to the House on refugees from Syria and Counter Terrorism 07/09/15

Turning to the question of refugees, Britain already works with the UN to deliver resettlement programmes and we will accept thousands more under these existing schemes. We have already provided sanctuary to more than 5,000 Syrians in Britain and have introduced a specific resettlement scheme, alongside those we already have, to help those Syrian refugees particularly at risk.

But given the scale of the crisis and the suffering of the Syrian people it is right that we should do much more. So Mr Speaker, we are proposing that Britain should resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over the rest of this Parliament. In doing so we will continue to show the world that this is a country of extraordinary compassion always standing up for our values and helping those in need.

So Mr Speaker, Britain will play its part alongside our other European partners. But because we are not part of the EU's borderless Schengen agreement or its relocation initiative, Britain is able to decide its own approach. So we will continue with our approach of taking refugees from the camps and from elsewhere in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. This provides refugees with a more direct and safe route to the UK, rather than risking the hazardous journey to Europe which has tragically cost so many lives.

Home Secretary's update on the migration situation in Europe and the Middle East 16/09/2015

Since 2011, we have taken more than 5,000 Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. And last week, the Prime Minister announced that we will resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection over the course of this Parliament.

The response of the British public has been one of overwhelming generosity, and many have been moved to make very kind offers of assistance. In order to harness that tremendous generosity, we have set up a [web page on GOV.UK to provide advice] for those who want to help. And in collaboration with Her Majesty's Government, the Red Cross has set up a helpline for anyone who wants advice on the ways in which they can be of assistance to Syrians in need of protection in the UK.

In addition to the new Minister, I have established a dedicated Gold Command Team within the Home Office to bring together important partners such as the Local Government Association, DFID, DCLG, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the UNHCR and NGOs. This team is working closely with local authorities across the UK to ensure that refugees will have the support and care they need locally on arrival.