

SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update and propose a localised model for the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Newark and Sherwood, that's in accordance with the requirements set out in the Governments Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 On 7 September 2015, the Prime Minister announced a significant extension of the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme for Syrian refugees. The Government pledged to resettle up to 20,000 refugees who have fled Syria over a 5 year period. The refugees who will be resettled through this scheme are currently in camps in countries surrounding Syria.

2.2 All refugees resettled through this process are assessed and vetted by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the camps that they are currently living in. This includes medical assessments and checks regarding affiliation to political parties. It prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin, for example women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence. Those relocated under the scheme will be awarded five years' Humanitarian Protection; meaning they will have access to public funds and employment.

Home Office Funding

2.3 The Home Office provides funding to local authorities who choose to participate in supporting vulnerable persons brought to the UK under this scheme.

2.4 The Home Office has set out a number of outcomes that are to be achieved in a Statement of Requirements (set out in **Appendix A**); this includes information about housing, utilities, furnishings and support that should be provided, such as an initial reception, case work support, cultural orientation and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision.

2.5 Up to £8,520 of funding is available per vulnerable person to local authorities in order to meet these requirements. An additional education grant accompanies each young person resettled (at a rate of £2,250 for children aged 3-4 years and £4,500 for children aged 5-18 years) and health and welfare grants are paid to Clinical Commissioning Group's and the Department for Work and Pensions directly.

2.6 The Home Office funding structure changed as of April 2016. The grant is now made available in a 40% initial payment, followed by two further instalments of 30% each, at month four and month eight. This is claimed via the Home Office Move-it Portal and the local authority is expected to keep detailed financial records on their expenditure.

3.0 East Midlands and Nottinghamshire Context

- 3.1 All councils in the County been working together with the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, to develop a localised programme for resettlement under the leadership of John Robinson, Chief Executive at Gedling Borough Council.
- 3.2 On a crude per-capita basis, the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire share of the Government's 20,000 'target' is 413 individuals, which broadly equates to 40-45 individuals per district/borough (approx. 10 households) and 116 in Nottingham City.
- 3.3 100 refugees were settled in the East Midlands during the first phase of arrivals in December 2015. Nottinghamshire received the largest cohort resettling 81 individuals/18 families, all with children and planning is underway for further arrivals.

4.0 Proposal for Newark & Sherwood

- 4.1 Councillor Roger Blaney as Leader of the Council and Councillor Bruce Laughton as Chairman of this Committee have been consulted on the Nottinghamshire proposals and committed Newark and Sherwood to 'play its part' in the delivery of this scheme, using private rented housing stock or social housing provided by Registered Providers. The Corporate Management Team subsequently appointed the Business Manager – Housing & Safeguarding as the Single Point of Contact and authorised planning for the resettlement of two initial families in Newark.
- 4.2 Therefore, in addition to attending partnership meetings at County and Regional level, activity has focussed on developing a delivery arrangement with Nottingham City Council and sourcing accommodation.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

- 4.3 An MoU is currently in development between Newark and Sherwood District Council and Nottingham City Council's (NCC) Community Cohesion Team, which sets out agreed terms for NCC to provide administrative support in delivery of the scheme and to co-ordinate and commission casework activities under a Casework Agreement with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum. Under this MoU NCC will draw down and hold Home Office funding on behalf of NSDC and will receive an 8% management fee for this from the grant.
- 4.4 Key responsibilities under the MoU for NSDC are to procure appropriate housing stock and identify this to the Home Office for matching under the scheme, escort refugees on arrival to their new accommodation and provide an orientation briefing. We are also required to provide a Single Point of Contact to be responsible for and support delivery of the scheme locally, to ensure families entering the area receive support in compliance with the Statement of Requirements. Reasonable expenditure (including officer time) will be covered by the grant funding available.
- 4.5 There are no other resulting liabilities to the Council, legal, procurement and information governance have no concerns with the draft MoU terms. Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe have all signed a similar agreement with NCC. Mansfield and Ashfield have adopted a different model and are administering and drawing down Home Office funding directly.

Sourcing Accommodation

- 4.6 Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum have been providing advice on resettlement and agree that Newark (close to the town centre) is the best location within the District to source accommodation. In order to ensure our own affordable housing stock isn't impacted upon, conversations have taken place with Nottingham Community Housing Association and their Board has agreed to work with the Council in providing one or two units of accommodation, which is dependent on a suitable properties becoming void.
- 4.7 Information has been presented to Private Sector Landlords at our Landlords Forum on 25 May 2016 and some direct approaches have been made to Landlords who have properties available to let in Newark, at Local Housing Allowance rent levels. Any properties that are put forward will be inspected to ensure it meets the required standards.

Community Support

- 4.8 Local authorities participating in this scheme take the lead role, in working with key partners to ensure that families are provided with accommodation and that their specific needs are met. Part of this is covered by the proposed MoU with NCC but a potential gap has been identified for Newark and Sherwood in respect of cultural orientation and community support – both are key elements for the sustainment of resettled Syrian families in Newark & Sherwood.
- 4.9 Therefore, Newark and Sherwood are currently exploring opportunities to pilot a Community Project/Worker, co-ordinated and commissioned under the MoU with NCC. The proposal is to utilise Home Office funding, to help build the capacity and infrastructure of our local community and voluntary sector to enable them to support in resettlement, orientation and integration of these families into our community.
- 4.10 A letter has been drafted (attached at **Appendix B**) to our local community and voluntary sector colleagues asking them to consider what role their organisation can play in supporting a Newark and Sherwood Resettlement Partnership, inviting them to attend a meeting in November 2016.

5.0 Other Migratory Pressures

- 5.1 There are three major Government Programmes currently in operation which the Committee should be aware of, as they are likely to impact on the Council in the future:
1. Syrian Resettlement (as set out in this report)
 2. Asylum Dispersal
 3. Unaccompanied children seeking asylum

Asylum Dispersal

- 5.2 Three Local Authorities have supported asylum dispersal within the East Midlands region since its introduction in 2000, to ensure the UK is able to discharge its obligations with regard to accommodation and assistance for those most in need claiming asylum. However, the Government have recently advised that the current geography of asylum

dispersal needs to be widened and it is likely Newark & Sherwood may be asked to support this programme.

Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

- 5.3 The Government have recently announced its Children at Risk Scheme, which commits the UK to resettle up to 3,000 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). This scheme applies to children outside of Europe in the Middle East and North Africa region. In addition, an amendment to the Immigration Bill has been agreed to resettle UASC from within Europe, specifically from Greece, Italy and France.
- 5.4 Colin Pettigrew, Corporate Director, Nottinghamshire County Council has been appointed as the strategic lead for this scheme and tasked with responding to the new Immigration Minister, Robert Goodwill MP with Nottinghamshire's position on UASC through the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership.
- 5.5 John Robinson, Chief Executive at Gedling Borough Council will continue to lead the joining up of these separate programmes on behalf of the Nottinghamshire Chief Executives and Leaders.

6.0 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The recommendation helps to support vulnerable people with a 'protected characteristic' under the Equalities Act 2010 and therefore has a positive impact on equality and diversity.

7.0 Finance - Comments of s151 Officer

- 7.1 There is no direct financial impact on Newark and Sherwood as this initiative is wholly funded via the Home Office. Newark and Sherwood have also signed consent forms to confirm/agree that NCC will act as the accountable body for the management of the regional funding pot related to arrivals in Newark and Sherwood under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: that

- a) **the Committee endorse the Council's commitment to this scheme and approve the per capita figures of 40-45 individuals (approx. 10 households maximum) to be resettled in Newark and Sherwood over the next 5 years;**
- b) **the Committee approve the proposed delivery model to enter into a MoU with Nottingham City Council as the accountable body for managing funds from the Home Office and commissioning activities under a Casework Contract and Community Contract in accordance with their Contract and Procedure rules and Data Protection Policy and Protocols; and**
- c) **Councillor B. Laughton, as Committee Chairman, approves and agrees to figurehead the letter attached in Appendix B to mobilise community and voluntary sector partners to support and join a Newark and Sherwood Resettlement Partnership.**

Reason for Recommendations

To ensure Newark and Sherwood has a robust localised model in place for the resettlement of Syrian refugees that's in accordance with the requirements set out in the Governments Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Leanne Monger, Business Manager – Housing and Safeguarding on extension 5545

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