

North Yorkshire County Council**Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee****Monday 3 October 2016****North Yorkshire Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme****1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the North Yorkshire Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme.

2 Background

- 2.1 In September 2015, as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons (SVPs) Relocation Scheme, the Prime Minister announced that during the remainder of this parliament the UK will accept up to 20,000 Syrian refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries as a result of the current crisis and who are particularly vulnerable.
- 2.2 The Home Office is working with the UNHCR to identify who will enter the UK. This process includes security vetting by the UK Home Office. Those who are accepted are granted a five year humanitarian protection visa before they enter the UK.
- 2.3 SVPs are identified as being in need of resettlement under the SVPs Relocation Scheme if they meet one or more of the UNHCR's vulnerability criteria.
- women and girls at risk
 - survivors of violence and/or torture
 - refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs
 - refugees with medical needs or disabilities
 - children and adolescents at risk
 - persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity
 - refugees with family links in resettlement countries
- 2.4 The Home Office pays a grant to local authorities accepting refugees under the resettlement programme to assist the SVPs smooth transition into society. The local authority receives the grant over the course of five years depending upon whether the SVP remains in the area during that period:
- The grant for year 1 (£8520 per person) is intended to cover specific costs relating to local authority management costs of the scheme, housing costs, caseworker/integration support, English language provision and arrival costs. Additional funding is provided to cover education costs in Year 1 (£2250 for 3-4 year olds and £4500 for 5-18 year olds). Local authorities can also apply to the Home Office to cover the necessary costs of social care where 'compelling cases exist' and additional funding for educational purposes where 'compelling cases exist'.
 - In years 2-5 Home Office funding to local authorities is provided to cover additional support to resettled SVPs beyond 12 months (e.g. more English

language classes, training or other employment-related activities, and further integration services), leading to an exit strategy at the end of the five year period. Funding for years 2-5 is paid on a tapering basis as follows:

Year	Funding per individual
Year 2	£5,000
Year 3	£3,700
Year 4	£2,300
Year 5	£1,000

- 2.5 Separate to the grant paid to local authorities, the Home Office provides Clinical Commissioning Groups with an initial payment of £2,600 per person to cover initial registration with health professionals and initial primary care costs (at a cost of £600 per person) and some initial secondary care costs (£2,000 per person).

3 Regional approach

- 3.1 In the Yorkshire and Humber region all 22 Local Authorities have committed to participating in the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) with a regional total of Syrians proportionate to the region's overall share of UK population, approximately 1,500 individuals.
- 3.2 Migration Yorkshire is co-ordinating the regional response, working with Government and Local Authorities to plan arrivals and managing the regional project. Leeds City Council is the accountable body for Migration Yorkshire.

4 North Yorkshire

The rollout of the scheme

- 4.1 Local Government North Yorkshire and York agreed in October 2015 that the district councils and County Council would work together in partnership to develop a joint response to the Government's request for resettling Syrian refugees.
- 4.2 Each local authority in North Yorkshire has identified the number of refugees that it can resettle based on housing capacity. The combined total is 197 Syrian refugees across the county. Resettlement is being phased across the county over a three year period. The first seven families arrived in July 2016.
- 4.3 The Refugee Council has been employed to provide the integration support to the families. The support needs of the families is intensive especially in the first few weeks and months of resettlement. The rapid deployment of a range of services is required locally in order to ensure that the families are provided with the right level of support to allow them to successfully integrate into the community. This involves housing, social care, education, health services, the DWP, JobCentre Plus and police working closely together.

5 Preparations for each flight

- 5.1 The County Council is providing the project management for the resettlement programme in North Yorkshire including co-ordinating multi-agency operational groups. The role of the operational groups is to ensure that a range of practical planning arrangements are undertaken pre-arrival and post-arrival. This includes actions relating to housing (primarily the district council's responsibility), education and English language provision (county council), health (clinical commissioning groups) and integration support (Refugee Council).
- 5.2 Operational groups have been set up in each of the three districts currently involved in resettling families (Craven, Harrogate and Selby) and will be set up in each of the remaining districts when they are due to resettle families.

6 Integration Support and longer term volunteer support

- 6.1 The Refugee Council is providing the integration and housing support and has a programme of appointments and drop-in sessions to assist the families' integration. Detailed timetables are put in place for the families to attend during their first week of arrival, involving school visits, JobCentre Plus and GP appointments. From week three onwards the Refugee Council usually provides weekly drop-in sessions for the families and partner organisations are invited to attend as appropriate.
- 6.2 The Refugee Council provides the integration support for 12 months in each district but at the same time works with local volunteers to ensure that longer term support mechanisms are in place for the families. The Refugee Council has recently employed a Volunteer Co-ordinator to build up a legacy of befriending support for the families.

7 Key observations to date

7.1 Housing

- The typical family size ranges between five or six in a household which means that there will be a greater demand for three bedroomed property over other property sizes.
- Some properties will need to be adapted in order to meet the complex health needs of individual family members in some families, with some fine-tuning of property adaptations required post-arrival.
- Some properties may have to be discounted for resettlement as a result of Police intelligence relating to the immediate surrounding area.

7.2 Health needs

- A number of the families will have complex needs, although there are different categories of complex needs and so not all cases will have highly complex health needs.
- The finer details of the more complex health cases will not be known until the families have arrived.

- Some family members will need access to counselling services and in some cases access to specialist psychological support, especially if they are survivors of violence and/or torture. CCGs can use the Home Office funding that they are provided with to commission specialist mental health services for the families or refer to existing services.
- Some family members might have more general anxiety issues related to extended family members still remaining in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan etc. To have any chance of other family members being reunited they need to be close family members (spouses or children).

7.3 Education

- Some of the children have not experienced formal education due to their age in relation to the date that the family fled from Syria. This means that schools will need to put in place a range of different solutions particularly for five year olds who might not have had the benefit of attending Early Years provision prior to entering primary education. Possible options include a staggered start or moving the child down a year group.
- There are occasionally age discrepancies with regards to the date of birth of individuals especially children.
- Some of the families arriving in July were concerned about the schools that had been chosen for their children by the local authority when there was another school that was nearer to their home. Our Schools Admission Service has decided that in future the families will be provided with the details of the local schools in their area when they arrive and be asked to choose a school from that list. This will avoid schools wasting time and incurring costs in advance preparing for arrivals if the children subsequently do not attend the school.

7.4 English language

- The County Council provides English language provision to the adult SVPs and is looking to increase the weekly provision that it provides. Part of the provision will also include employability skills programmes. However in those instances where an SVP's understanding of the English language is very basic and they have limited literacy skills, effort will need to be focused upon building up their English language skills first. The Home Office has recently announced that it will be providing additional money for ESOL provision for SVPs, which will assist in increasing the weekly provision.

7.5 Social care

- Language barriers and cultural expectations of some of the families will mean that responsibility for parental care will be placed upon immediate family members. Consequently these families will be less willing to accept outside support from social care and District Nurses. This in itself is not an issue and in many circumstances will be the best solution. However the key thing is that the family members caring for their relatives are provided with timely advice from relevant professionals including medical requirements.

7.6 Welfare benefits

- By October 2016 five out of seven of North Yorkshire districts will be in Full Service Universal Credit areas (new and existing claimants). There is a five week wait for Universal Credit applications to be processed and the first full payment made. This is longer than for existing welfare benefits. The longer waiting period means that the initial cash allowance provided to families is more likely to run out before the welfare benefits are received. However like other claimants SVPs are eligible for an advance payment which they then pay back over a set period. In July there was initial confusion in one of the districts by DWP staff regarding whether SVPs could receive an advance payment. There was also a short delay in the families receiving their Universal Credit main payment and the housing element of the payment was incorrectly paid direct to the family rather than to the Housing Authority. The DWP has now provided a named contact person for the Refugee Council to contact to liaise with to ensure better and faster communications.
- In light of the longer waiting period to receive Universal Credit there is perhaps a need - in addition to the information that the Refugee Council provide about budgeting - for the families to receive additional budgeting advice early on in their resettlement. The Refugee Council is currently liaising with the Citizens Advice Bureaux to provide such provision.

7.7 Volunteers

- Volunteers can provide support in a number of ways from providing 'non-essential' items that cannot be funded from the Home Office funding. This needs to be co-ordinated though so that the families do not become overwhelmed. Befriending support, whilst a vital part of the families' integration (e.g. to provide assistance with conversational English and/or transport), also needs to be co-ordinated. The Refugee Council now has a Volunteer Co-ordinator in place.
- Volunteer support is best tapped into after the families have had their initial round of appointments otherwise it makes it more difficult for the Refugee Council to carry out its integration work with the families.

8 Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Programme

- 8.1 The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Programme (VCRP) was announced by the Immigration Minister on 21st April 2016: "The new scheme will be specifically tailored to support vulnerable and refugee children at risk and their families. Several hundred individuals will be resettled over the next year with a view of resettling up to 3,000 over the lifetime of this Parliament."
- 8.2 The 3,000 people will be identified by the UNHCR as falling under the 'children and adolescents at risk' category and referred into the UK programme. The scheme will be open to vulnerable children of all nationalities identified by the UNHCR from the Middle East and North Africa region.

- 8.3 The vast majority of the 3,000 will come in family units, with a small minority (about 5%) in units with carers who are not parents. There may be a few individuals under the scheme who additionally enter the UK as unaccompanied children, although they will enter the system through the unaccompanied asylum seeker children route, and do not form part of the VCRP.
- 8.4 Refugees under the VCRP will be coming under slightly different criteria to the Syrian Resettlement Programme but in most cases there should not be any real differences. The VCRP will include other nationalities but there will be no lower level of humanitarian need or differences in their support or integration. The criteria of 'children at risk' will in many cases present no differences to the cases received under the Syrian Resettlement Programme as this was already one of the criteria and there have been many cases received nationally which come under this criteria.
- 8.5 North Yorkshire County Council has agreed to take part in the VCRP in partnership with North Yorkshire district councils. This will involve resettling up to 27 individuals.

9 Recommendation:

- 9.1 That the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress to date of the North Yorkshire Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme.

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