

North Yorkshire Council

Executive Member for Corporate Services

26 September 2023

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: use of MoD SFA

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive for Localities

1.0 Purpose of Report

- (i) To consider an urgent request from the Home Office to North Yorkshire Council to use additional Ministry of Defence (MoD) Service Family Accommodation (SFA) for ARAP eligible individuals and their family members currently residing abroad.
- (ii) To seek approval to use additional MoD SFA properties in North Yorkshire to accommodate ARAP individuals and their family members currently residing abroad.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) is for Afghan citizens ('Locally Employed Staff') who worked for or with the UK Government in Afghanistan in exposed or meaningful roles. It includes the offer of relocation to the UK for those deemed eligible. The policy was implemented in April 2021 to reflect the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and consequent 'serious risk to life' of Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES).
- 2.2 Afghan citizens who are eligible for relocation to the UK under the ARAP may relocate with a partner, dependent children and additional family members who are also deemed eligible for relocation. Those arriving in the UK under the scheme are granted indefinite leave to remain. There is currently no end date for the scheme.
- 2.3 Following the announcement that NATO military forces would withdraw from Afghanistan, the UK government accelerated the pace of relocations under the ARAP. In August 2021 British military personnel arrived in Afghanistan as part of Operation Pitting to evacuate British and eligible Afghan nationals from Kabul following the rapid insurgency of the Taliban to take control of Afghanistan. Over 15,000 eligible Afghans and British nationals were evacuated during Operation Pitting¹ (13 August to 28 August 2021). To date, in the region of 12,200 individuals have now relocated to the UK under ARAP.
- 2.4 In 2021/22 North Yorkshire County Council approved the use of 10 SFA properties at Catterick Garrison for Afghan households in bridging accommodation in the UK ('cohort 1').
- 2.5 In early 2023, the MoD offered additional empty SFA units in various parts of the UK to accommodate eligible Afghan families still stranded in Afghanistan or in third countries. The intention was to try to ensure that more families who qualify under the ARAP could come to

¹ [Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/afghan-resettlement-programme-operational-data)

the UK at a time that the Home Office was seeking to reduce and ultimately end the use of bridging accommodation.

- 2.6 On 14 February 2023, the Executive approved in principle the use of 10 additional SFA properties in Catterick Garrison ('cohort 2') for eligible Afghan citizens currently residing in Afghanistan or in third countries seeking relocation to the UK under the ARAP.
- 2.7 The UK government subsequently decided to close all bridging hotels in the UK by autumn 2023. Consequently, its priority was in the short term to use vacant MoD SFA properties for ARAP households in the bridging hotels in the UK, to reduce the number of those households becoming homeless. Seven of the ten SFA properties used in Catterick Garrison for cohort 2 will be accommodating ARAP households who were in bridging hotels in the UK. The three remaining properties will accommodate ARAP households currently residing abroad. Nine households in cohort 2 have been identified to date for the properties and four of those households are now residing in the properties.
- 2.8 Eligible Afghan ARAP households are still waiting to come to the UK, post-closure of the bridging hotel estate, and so the Home Office has now asked for North Yorkshire Council to approve the use of additional SFA properties in the county for Afghan ARAP who have fled to third countries from Afghanistan.

3 Use of additional MoD SFA empty homes in the UK for ARAP households currently living abroad

- 3.1 Humanitarian concerns remain about the plight of the Afghan households who are eligible to come to the UK but are not able to do so because they have not secured accommodation in the UK. Afghan ARAP households eligible to come to the UK remain at risk of being deported from third countries, notably Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan.² The MoD properties provide the opportunity for some of those families to be able to come to the UK without further delay.
- 3.2 The estimated number of ARAP individuals and their immediate family members stranded in Afghanistan is around 3,000 people out of a total of around 4,300 ARAP eligible individuals and their immediate family members awaiting relocation, some of whom are in third countries undergoing visa checks.
- 3.3 The Home Office is now trying to match at pace Afghan ARAP households overseas to Service Family Accommodation in the UK.
- 3.4 The MoD has offered a further 49 SFA properties in North Yorkshire for this third cohort: Afghan ARAP households currently living abroad. However, 22 of those properties are in rural parts of the county (Linton-on-Ouse and Dishforth) with limited access to services, or where there is no existing Afghan community or integration support (Whitby). 16 properties have been offered in Catterick, 10 in Ripon and one in Harrogate.
- 3.5 North Yorkshire has to date resettled or is in the process of resettling 218 persons/45 Afghan ARAP/ACRS households. In addition, there will be 10 Afghan ARAP/ACRS households resettled in Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2 properties by March 2024. Properties are currently being identified in the Harrogate area.
- 3.6 Acceptance of eight SFA properties in cohort 3 across Ripon, Harrogate and Catterick Garrison would be manageable in relation to school places, integration support and English language classes. Caution is necessary in relation to accommodating more than eight

² [Just two Afghans promised safe haven by UK army brought from Pakistan in past three months | The Independent](#)

additional households. Existing housing pressures in the county need to be considered alongside the fact that North Yorkshire Council is responsible for finding move-on housing for the ARAP households in the SFA properties should they wish to stay in North Yorkshire. Permanent housing has yet to be found for two of the households in cohort 1 and potentially for 10 households in cohort 2. Since February 2021 North Yorkshire has also resettled 175 persons/45 households under the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme and from spring 2022 to date has received over 1300 Homes for Ukraine arrivals, some of whom are requiring move-on housing in the county following the end of their sponsorship period.

4.0 Leasing arrangements

- 4.1 For cohort 3, the MoD has introduced a direct leasing model to overcome some of the barriers that have been signalled to date by local authorities. Some of these barriers included non-stockholding status and internal resourcing. The main objective for direct leasing is to increase and expedite uptake of SFA properties.
- 4.2 The MoD would lease the properties through Pinnacle - the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's contractor. Pinnacle will be responsible for the logistics and technicalities of the tenancy, including bringing properties up to move-in standard, the signing of leases, collecting of rent, and liaison with families once they are in properties for maintenance/repair reasons.
- 4.3 Tenancies offered would be for three years as standard, with six-month break clauses. The leases would be Common Law Tenancies, as the MoD cannot grant ASTs (or Assured Tenancies). The main difference with ASTs is the termination position, which is governed by the provisions in the tenancy rather than by statute.
- 4.4 North Yorkshire Council will be expected to provide integration support to households resettled under cohort 3, as is currently the case for the cohort 1 and cohort 2 households. Funding is provided by the Home Office intended to cover local authority costs.

Responsibility split:

Pinnacle	MoD	Local Authority	Home Office
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move in/Move out appointments • Signing tenancy agreements with families. • Collecting of rent. • Point of Contact for families for repairs/ maintenance. Repairs are undertaken by DIO contractors, Amey and Vivo • Furnishing the properties. • Identification of any damages and passing of these to DIO for recovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts as Landlord. • Attends engagement meetings with LAs on Direct Leasing progression. • Policy management, including an MoD SFA Board to govern the Direct Leasing policy. • Rates of rent management. • Management of relationship with Pinnacle. • Manage terms of evictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration support and application of the Integration Tariff while families are in SFA. • Attend engagement meetings with MoD/HO. • Submit Property Offer Form. • Support families with understanding leases and moving to properties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads on engagement with LAs. • Runs the process to match families to properties.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 Humanitarian concerns remain about the plight of the Afghan households who are eligible to live in the UK but are not able to do so because they have not secured accommodation here. The MoD properties provides an opportunity for some of those households to be able to come to the UK without further delay, in advance of permanent housing being found.
- 5.2 North Yorkshire County Council's pledge made in February 2023 was to use additional SFA properties in Catterick Garrison for eligible Afghan citizens living abroad who were seeking relocation to the UK under the ARAP. Following the closure of the bridging hotel estate in the UK, the Home Office is now urgently trying to match Afghan ARAP households overseas to Service Family Accommodation in the UK.
- 5.3 A collaborative, cross-government approach is in place to support the effective integration of the Afghan families under the ARAP.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Executive Member for Corporate Services:
- (i) Agrees to the use of an additional eight MoD SFA properties in North Yorkshire for Afghan ARAP households eligible to come to the UK who are currently living outside of the UK.

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Background Documents:

- Report to Executive 14 February 2023: Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: use of additional MOD properties
[Agenda for Executive on Tuesday, 14th February, 2023, 11.00 am | North Yorkshire Council](#)

- Report to Executive Member for Corporate Services, 18 July 2023: Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: use of additional MOD properties – change of eligibility from Afghan ARAP families in Afghanistan and third countries to Afghan ARAP families in bridging hotel accommodation in the UK

[Decision - Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: use of additional MOD properties – change of eligibility from Afghan ARAP families in Afghanistan and third countries to Afghan ARAP families in bridging hotel accommodation in the UK | North Yorkshire Council](#)

- [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendices:

None