

North Yorkshire Council

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9 June 2025

North Yorkshire Refugee Resettlement

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update and progress report on refugee resettlement in North Yorkshire relating to the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme and Afghan resettlement programmes.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2019, the UK government announced the **United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme**. The intention of this was to introduce a single refugee resettlement scheme for the UK to respond to refugee crises anywhere in the globe. North Yorkshire district councils and North Yorkshire County Council responded to the government's call to participate in the UKRS by agreeing to resettle 200 refugees
- 2.2 From August 2021 to date North Yorkshire has helped to respond to the evacuation of people from Afghanistan who qualify to come to the UK under the **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)**¹, or the **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme**². From March 2025 the ARAP and ACRS schemes have been merged into a single scheme called the **Afghan Resettlement Programme**³. This change does not affect the criteria for those eligible to apply to settle in the UK. There is also no requirement for applicants to reapply to this scheme if they were already waiting to receive a decision on their application to the ARAP or ACRS.
- 2.3 In February 2024, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities announced a new Afghan specific Community Sponsorship programme for people on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme called **Communities for Afghans**⁴. Modelled on the community sponsorship scheme and drawing on lessons from the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the delivery model is decentralised with responsibilities delegated to Citizens UK, sponsor groups and local authorities. Local authorities are expected to play a principal role in funding delivery (as in HfU), providing longer-term integration support, and statutory responsibilities including homelessness, safeguarding and social care provision.

¹ Afghan citizens who worked for or with the UK Government in Afghanistan and may be eligible for relocation to the UK.

[Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy)

² The ACRS scheme prioritises those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law; and vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

³ [Afghan Resettlement Programme - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-resettlement-programme)

⁴ [Communities for Afghans project: DLUHC policy update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/communities-for-afghans)

3.0 United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

3.1 General Overview – North Yorkshire:

North Yorkshire has resettled 180 persons (43 households) under the UKRS from February 2021 to date.

3.2 We intend to complete the former North Yorkshire district councils' and North Yorkshire County Council's pledge of resettling 200 persons under the scheme. The original timescale was to have met this pledge by 2024 but other competing service pressures and demands have since arisen, including those arising from Afghan and Ukrainian arrivals. Probably for these reasons, the UKRS scheme has had a lower than anticipated take up amongst local authorities elsewhere in the UK, especially when compared to the predecessor Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

Number of persons/households initially resettled in North Yorkshire under the UKRS	Number of those persons/households remaining in North Yorkshire under the UKRS during their three-year support period
180 (46 households)	177 (46 households)

3.3 The bulk of the UKRS arrivals in North Yorkshire have been Syrians. However, as part of the scheme we have also resettled a small number of Iraqis, Afghan Hazara (a persecuted ethnic group in Afghanistan), Sudanese and South Sudanese.

3.4 Wherever possible we tried to ensure that newer arrivals had a similar cultural background and language to earlier arrivals within a given town (typically Arabic speakers). However, even where this has not been the case there have been examples of existing refugee families helping to support new arrivals.

3.5 The period of resettlement support for UKRS refugees has been for five years. From 2022/23, the period of support it was anticipated that the Home Office would reduce this to three years, to make it in line with the support period provided to Afghans resettled through the ARAP and ACRS scheme. However, this has not occurred to date. Locally, we have found that three years resettlement support is a more suitable period as it encourages families to become independent more quickly and not to build up a dependency culture. Consequently, the integration support that we provide in North Yorkshire for UKRS households is tailored towards the first three years post-arrival in the UK. Adult learners of the English language are signposted to mainstream ESOL classes beyond three years.

4.0 **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)/Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme/Afghan Resettlement Scheme (ARS)**

4.1 General overview – North Yorkshire:

As of May 2025, North Yorkshire has resettled 490 persons (98 households) under the Afghan resettlement schemes. From that figure, 54 persons (11 households) have moved out of county.

4.2 41 households are currently residing in MoD Settled Service Family Accommodation (**SSFA**). SSFA is offered via a three-year lease during which time the household is supported in finding move-on accommodation.

- 4.3 It has been a particularly busy period. This has been due to the number of ARAP households that continued to be moved into MoD Settled Service Family Accommodation (SSFA) up until April 2025. Separately (and not included in the figures in the table below) has been the establishment of a transitional site at Catterick Garrison, which opened in August 2024 and closed in May 2025.

Number of persons/households initially resettled in North Yorkshire	Number of those persons/households remaining in North Yorkshire during their three-year support period
490/98 households)	436 (87 households)

5.0 Transitional Site – North Yorkshire:

- 5.1 **TSFA** is staging accommodation for families who are waiting for SSFA or other housing to become available. At each TSFA cluster there is a Sub-Unit of MoD personnel responsible for the welfare of ARAP families. They also facilitate the work of contractual partners who are delivering some of the necessary initial integration work on behalf of Defence (in North Yorkshire this included North Yorkshire Council and the Refugee Council).
- 5.2 390 individuals in total were accommodated at the TSFA site between August 2023 to its closure in May 2025. The average length of stay was 72 nights.
- 5.3 The integration support provided to households in TSFA properties has been broadly the same as that provided to the households in SSFA and permanent housing in the county.
- 5.4 Close partnership working between the Refugee Council and the Ministry of Defence leading up to the closure of the TSFA site, helped minimise the number of households who were required to move on to another TSFA site. Emphasis was placed on encouraging Afghan households to identify their own properties with support from the Refugee Council’s on-site caseworkers. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) provided targeted casework funding to assist with this. Some of the lessons learned from moving households on from the transitional site will assist with the move-on support that will be required for the households in SSFA in North Yorkshire.

6.0 Local Authority Housing Fund (Round 3) – North Yorkshire

- 6.1 The previous government announced a third round of the Local Authority Housing Fund in 2024. This was subsequently rolled forward under the current government. The funding awarded to North Yorkshire Council is for permanent accommodation for eligible Afghan persons as well as temporary accommodation for homeless families within the general resident population. Round 3 has a greater weighting towards temporary accommodation for homeless families than was the case under Round 2.
- 6.2 The current position of the MHCLG is that the Afghan element of LAHF3 should be used in the first instance to accommodate new households not yet living in the county. This is despite concerns expressed to MHCLG by North Yorkshire Council about the move-on housing implications of the ARAP households currently residing in SSFA in North Yorkshire. There could be some flexibility if an ARAP household in SSFA is within six months of the expiry of their lease. However, this will often not correspond to the time that the LAHF3 properties become available. A meeting will be held with MHCLG and North Yorkshire Council in the coming weeks to discuss the challenges that we face.

7.0 Afghan Resettlement Programme

- 7.1 There remain several thousand Afghans still stranded in Afghanistan or in third countries who are eligible to come to the UK for resettlement. This comes at a time though when, for understandable reasons, the MoD is wanting to move away from a heavy reliance upon its own estate to accommodate new arrivals.
- 7.2 In December 2024 the Secretary of Defence laid a statement in Parliament announcing the government's intention to launch the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP): a single pipeline that consolidates Afghan resettlement (ACRS and ARAP), implemented on arrival to the UK.
- 7.3 The ARP was formally launched on 1 March 2025. Any new arrivals to the UK after that date are being resettled under ARP. New arrivals will move to transitional accommodation procured by the MoD and will be a mixture of hotels, Serviced Accommodation, and a reduced usage of the MoD defence estate. There will be a nine-month limit on stays in transitional accommodation and there will greater emphasis on individuals finding their own accommodation with support from case-worker staff. Resettlement support will be for three years from the date that a household arrives in the UK and will include the length of time spent in transitional accommodation.
- 7.4 All local authorities nationally are being asked to take part in this new scheme. Whilst participation is not mandatory at this stage, the government is monitoring involvement and potentially it could become a mandated programme if required.
- 7.5 The government has encouraged local and regional solutions to the ARP, including locally led provision of transitional hotel accommodation. A regional resettlement model has been introduced for the Yorkshire & Humber Region with all local authorities involved.
- 7.6 Based upon a 'fair share' approach of population size, the Yorkshire & Humber region is expected to accommodate 650 individuals each year under the ARP until further notice. For North Yorkshire the allocation is 73 persons per year until further notice. We anticipate that the LAHF3 properties will accommodate North Yorkshire's allocation for the current year. Beyond that, if subsequent funding rounds to provide additional housing are not provided, North Yorkshire Council would need to decide whether to continue participating in this scheme unless it became mandatory.

8.0 UKRS and Afghan resettlement service provision

8.1 Integration Support

- UKRS and Afghan households resettled in North Yorkshire continue to have the benefit of the Refugee Council to assist with day-to-day issues.
- 8.2 The Refugee Council provides a three-year integration support model; the aim is to facilitate the successful integration of clients and to empower them to be independent.
- 8.3 There are two phases to the integration support:
- Phase 1 (0-18 months) is intensive casework support where a household has a Resettlement Worker assigned to them and support is a combination of face-to-face home visits, accompanying to appointments weekly drop-in meetings in the local area and remote communication such as WhatsApp and Video Calling. This phase involves the refugees in their own plans and progress in the initial stages of their lives in the UK with the aim of promoting independence and self-responsibility.

- Phase 2 support: (19-36 months) intensive casework support ends and families no longer have a designated Resettlement Worker, rather they contact a Phase 2 worker via an advice line and will be encouraged to engage with the service in English, interpreters will be available if necessary. It is recognised that some households will still require support and can experience crisis but in general the Refugee Council's approach is to encourage clients to do things for themselves where possible.

8.4 The Refugee Council uses an assessment tool ('outcomes star') to assess an adult's progress, showing the person's integration journey in eight key areas (Housing, Money, English, Education and Work, Family and Children, Community and Connections, Law Systems and Health and Wellbeing). It demonstrates the impact of the Refugee Council support and identifies key trends.

8.5 Community Development is an integral part of the Refugee Council's service model alongside volunteer support and is available throughout the three years. Community Development focuses on partnership working with external agencies and raising awareness of the refugee journey; group activities are facilitated such as women's groups across the county, picking up trends in support needs and facilitating group briefings with external agencies to address priority areas.

8.6 Volunteer support bridges the gap between refugees and host communities, reduces isolation and builds confidence such as helping families to develop English Language skills and orientating them around their local area.

8.7 English Classes

North Yorkshire Council's Adult Learning Service provides UKRS and Afghan ARAP/ACRS adults who have a poor to moderate understanding of English, with eight hours formal language learning (ESOL) each week in their local area. This entails bespoke English language courses focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and skills to scaffold successful resettlement. The provision includes face-to-face lessons in classrooms as well as online sessions. In addition to ESOL, learners can study supplementary subjects such as ICT, ESOL for Driving Theory, Work based Communication, Life in North Yorkshire, and Pathway into Maths, where not only do they learn new skills, but they also have the chance to practice their English conversation. An online learning platform called 'Flash Academy' has also been introduced to help support and accelerate progress.

8.8 Young adults with some understanding of the English language are encouraged to attend a College of Further Education so that they can pursue vocational-related training. This also has the benefit of being able to expand their social circle.

8.9 In some parts of the county, volunteers run conversational classes, either in groups or on a one-to-one basis. This helps supplement North Yorkshire Council's formal provision and provides invaluable befriending support to the families and wider connections in their town. The English@Home project was set up specifically to support ESOL learning. North Yorkshire Council's Adult Learning Service works closely with the volunteers and coordinators, and this has proved to be a very successful partnership. Volunteers also help with some of the classroom lessons giving learners further opportunity to take part in real-world, local, British English as well as providing invaluable encouragement and support.

8.10 Support in Schools

North Yorkshire Council's Minority Inclusion Support Team (MIST) have clear processes in place so that all children and young people arriving in North Yorkshire through resettlement schemes access an appropriate school or educational setting,

including access to two-year funding and FEAST programmes, as quickly as possible after arrival.

- 8.11 Where details of families are available prior to arrival, school applications are made in advance so the children can resume their education as quickly as possible. Staff in the team also liaise with Further Education colleges to secure places for +16-year-olds and young adults.
- 8.12 The team offers ongoing support and advice to schools and families with home school liaison, applying for EHCAR assessments and around educational transitions (nursery to reception, primary to secondary school).
- 8.13 A 'Living in the UK: Support for Families' presentation is delivered to new families within their first two months of living in North Yorkshire. This includes information and guidance around education, health care, internet safety, and sources of support available including the Solihull Approach and Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust's parenting resources and app (available in a wide range of languages).
- 8.14 Additional staff have been recruited recently, chiefly to provide key worker support to growing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) aged 16-18 living in supported accommodation in North Yorkshire, but also for the growing number of children arriving through the Afghan ARAP/ACRS schemes. Some of the successful candidates who were appointed include previous or existing clients on the SVP/VCRS/UKRS/Afghan ARAP/ACRS schemes.
- 8.15 Employment
Progress in getting the UKRS and Afghan adults into employment continues to be steady but slow especially amongst the newer arrivals. We continue to find that although the spoken English of the Afghan males can be reasonably good (especially if they have been interpreters), their written understanding is less so. This impacts upon their ability to provide good quality employment applications and to perform well in written tests in interviews. Interview technique can also sometimes be poor.
- 8.16 Jobs range from professional (a minority of cases) to the bulk being in semi-skilled or low-skilled employment. Some clients have set up their own businesses. Three clients who have previously been employed as doctors in Afghanistan are studying to become doctors in the UK. Eight clients have secured employment in North Yorkshire Council, having successfully gone through the normal competitive interview process.
- 8.17 Barriers to getting into employment continue to be the lack of skills match; physical and mental health problems; high levels of competition for jobs from people educated in the UK; poor understanding of the English language; and sometimes, lack of access to a car/driving licence. A significant number of clients also prefer to work part-time rather than full-time hours, which further reduces their chances of securing better paid jobs.
- 8.18 Utilising the Home Office grant, North Yorkshire Council continues to fund one full-time member of staff in the HR Resourcing Solutions team to provide employment support to the working age adults. This also involves the provision of relevant training to validate existing skills and to provide additional skills and training. A full report is contained in Appendix 1.
- 8.19 Health and Social Care Services
All family members are registered with a local GP practice and GPs are asked to provide them with a medical health assessment when they first arrive in North Yorkshire. NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are reimbursed by the Home Office for primary and

secondary health care costs for the first 12 months after a family has arrived in the UK. Exceptional health care costs can be applied for separately.

- 8.20 North Yorkshire Council can claim back funding from the Home Office for 'exceptional costs' relating to an individual's social care support and for the initial costs of special educational needs provision (SEND).
- 8.21 Several families continue to access counselling support through the regional children and families' specialist mental health service provided by Solace. This provision allows clients to be fast-tracked for support from trained counsellors (with interpreters) experienced in supporting survivors of persecution and exile.
- 8.22 Volunteer Support
There are refugee support groups in most of the towns where refugees have been resettled in North Yorkshire. They provide additional invaluable support including befriending support to the families. Some of the volunteers are Refugee Council trained volunteers assisted by a Refugee Council Volunteer Co-ordinator.
- 8.23 Volunteers have helped families feel more settled in their local area and helped them to develop wider links in their local area. Some volunteers for instance have signposted families to clubs and activities. Volunteers have also provided conversational English sessions and organised trips and activities.

9.0 Implications

- 9.1 Local Member: None.
- 9.2 Financial: There are no additional financial implications to North Yorkshire Council arising directly from this report. The Home Office funds the UKRS and Afghan refugee resettlement schemes in North Yorkshire.
- 9.3 Human Resources: There are no additional human resources implications to North Yorkshire Council arising directly from this report. North Yorkshire Council employs staff on the refugee resettlement programme, but they are funded through central government grant funding.
- 9.4 Legal: There are no legal implications to North Yorkshire Council arising directly from this report. The UKRS and Afghan refugee resettlement schemes are currently voluntary schemes. However, participating local authorities are required to meet specific obligations set out in the funding instruction to local authorities from the Home Office.
- 9.5 Equalities: None.
- 9.6 Environmental Impacts/Benefits including Climate Change Impact Assessment: None

10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1 The Committee is asked to note and comment on the progress of the refugee resettlement programme in North Yorkshire relating to the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme and Afghan resettlement programmes.

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Background documents: None.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: North Yorkshire Council Refugee Employability Project. (UKRS/Afghan ARAP and ACRS): May 2025