



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

16 July 2019

Subject: Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

For members to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the progress of the scheme so far and to agree to participate.

- 1. RECOMMENDATION(S): Members agree to participate in the Home Office Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and agree to accommodate 2 households.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: Whilst recognising the pressures that local authorities are faced with, the country has a statutory duty to provide support and assistance to those who are most in need.

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1999 makes direct provision for the Secretary of State to provide support to those claiming and to instruct the cooperation and support of local authorities in doing so. The 1999 Act was introduced with the intention of sharing the impact of dispersal of asylum seekers across the UK and to ease the over reliance on any one area. However, the Home Secretary has stated that Local Authorities will not be instructed to take part in these schemes.

In the event that asylum is granted, eligibility for services including housing, and a local connection to the district would be gained. In the event that asylum is granted, cases would receive a 28 notice to leave their accommodation and would be considered statutorily homeless.

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial Implications: FIN/24/20

Asylum seekers accommodated under this scheme remain the responsibility of the Home Office until such a time that asylum is granted. Funding has been outlined in the paper below 3.1.1. Costs will be met from this funding.

In the event that asylum is granted, there would be longer term cost implications and demand on services to be considered.

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing: Officers would be required to engage with registered providers including Acis Group and private landlords to help determine availability and suitability of accommodation to be used for asylum dispersal.

Intense resource needed for initial set up but minimal input from local authority staff after this stage.

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

NB: Please explain how you have considered the policy's impact on different groups (for example: young people, elderly, ethnic minorities, LGBT community, rural residents, disabled, others).

Risk Assessment :

Data Protection Implications : None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :

Community tensions if communication is not managed correctly and in line with agreed messages

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Home Office Asylum Dispersal Scheme 15/09/15

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

Executive Summary

Overview

This report is aimed at informing members of the progress of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in Lincolnshire within the last 12 months and for members to agree to accept 2 households into the district.

The scheme is currently being led by North Kesteven District Council for Lincolnshire and significant progress has been made since 2015 when an initial report was brought to committee.

It was decided that in this scheme Lincolnshire would act as 1 authority and not as individual districts. Lincolnshire has already accepted 7 families shared between South Holland, City of Lincoln, North and South Kesteven but it is asked for each authority to pledge a bigger commitment.

Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council have not signalled any commitment at this stage but East Lindsey are looking for member approval. It has not been decided for further numbers across Lincolnshire in terms of commitment to support further resettlement through this scheme beyond the March 2019 charter but this is to be tabled for a discussion in June 2019.

What is required?

If members agree to participate in the scheme, it is expected for the council to provide accommodation which was initially welcomed by Acis Group in August 2018 but this would need to be revisited. A welcome pack of support would be provided by a company called Upbeat Communities, Health Services which are funded separately and flexibility of council staff to accommodate some out of hours provision. Further details can be found in the memorandum of understanding in Appendix 1.

Information to inform members of difficulties our neighbouring districts have faced and of the lessons learned can be found in Appendix 2. This is to ensure there is a comprehensive understanding in making the decision as to whether to participate in this scheme.

Available funding

Funding is available which will be administered by the Home office by NKDC as the lead authority. Further details are documented in section 3.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2015 a paper was brought to committee for consideration to agree to participate in the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. This paper is included above.
- 1.2 The paper was agreed in principle but we awaited further information from Lincolnshire County Council re financial support for education and health and facilities available for persons after 2017. This has now been agreed.
- 1.3 Lincolnshire agreed in 2015 to operate as a cluster area meaning we would accommodate families as a county rather than 7 separate districts.
- 1.4 It should be noted that at the Greater Lincolnshire Chief Executives meeting on 22nd June 2018 it was agreed that Lincolnshire would accept a limited number of Syrian refugee families in common with many areas of the country.
- 1.5 East Midlands Councils (EMC) are coordinating this initiative and to date 7 families have been accommodated in the county. The partnership agreed to consider the position with regard to any additional families at a future meeting in June 2019 which has since been delayed.
- 1.6 If accommodation is offered, East Midlands Councils will have regard to education placements and other support services such as Special Educational Needs.

2. Overview - Asylum Dispersal

- 2.1 The receiving authority would be notified by the Home Office of any domestic abuse, violent crimes or safeguarding issues.
- 2.2 There is additional support for people identified by the Home Office as vulnerable. This consists of provision of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Language), a meet and greet, a 12 month support plan, community rehabilitation and access to education. The details of this implementation is yet to be learned. WLDC members are attending sessions to understand the practical details our neighbouring authorities have undertaken.

2.3 Asylum seekers accommodated within dispersal schemes are required to report regularly to the Home Office and that a local reporting mechanism would need to be established in the areas that are used.

3. Overview - Funding

3.1 The receiving authority will receive payments for households accepted onto the scheme. Payments are administered by the lead authority – North Kesteven District Council.

3.1.1 Funding is given every year for five years to include educational costs, improve English language skills as well as given support for 12 months. Funding is set on a 'per person' tariff basis for direct local authority costs. This is broken down as follows:

UNIT COSTS					
	Adult Benefi t Claim ant	Other Adults	Children 5-18	Children 3-4	ChildrenU- 3
Local Authority Costs – Year 1	£ 8,520	£ 8,520	£ 8,520	£ 8,520	£ 8,520
Education	0	0	4,500	2,250	0
TOTALS	8520	8,520	13020	10770	8520

Additional costs for Years 2-5

Year 2 - £5,000

Year 3 - £3,700

Year 4 - £2,300

Year 5 - 1,000

3.1.2 Note: Position beyond 2020 unclear. Suggested at a recent partnership meeting that post 2020, funding may reduce from 5 years to 3 years. Funding and arrangements beyond 2020 are expected at any time. Additional support is also available for education and medical needs

3.2 At the point that asylum is granted, a 28 day NTQ is given by the Home Office. This is an important consideration for us in terms of our ability to accommodate longer term and impact on our temporary accommodation use and access to sustainable housing solutions. Failed asylum seekers will be managed and detained / removed by the Home Office.

3.4 Refugees are able to access welfare benefit payments and other public services. On arrival in the UK Refugees are issued with 5

year Humanitarian Protection Visa and are able to work immediately.

- 3.5 The grant is not ring fenced and can be used by LA's to provide support to refugees as required, e.g. support for integration, English language training, social care, etc. The funds can be pooled and managed across all areas and all refugees in a sub-regional arrangement
- 3.6 Lincolnshire District Councils already participating in the scheme are currently analysing costs to date.

4. **Refugee Resettlement in Lincolnshire**

- 4.1 It is important to ensure the implications of participation in this scheme are fully understood. At the request of the Lincolnshire Chief Executive's Group, the Lincolnshire Refugee Resettlement Partnership was convened in 2018 to provide a partnership approach (Local Authority Resettlement) to resettle and integrate refugees in Lincolnshire.
- 4.2 A memorandum of understanding for the partnership has been agreed and signed by the participating authorities and agreed that NKDC take a coordination role for the partnership (appendix 1).
- 4.3 WLDC officers have attended Lincolnshire Refugee Resettlement Partnership meetings but have been clear that a decision has not yet been made in respect of WLDC participation in the SRP. We will need to have a decision as to whether the authority intends to participate.

5. **Practicalities of Resettlement**

- 5.1 There is guidance available for Local Authorities who participate in the scheme including checklists and advice to facilitate resettlement. Additionally, the Lincolnshire Refugee Resettlement Partnership provides a framework that has been tested, and a forum within which experiences can be shared to support future resettlement in Lincolnshire. On a practical level, there are a number of things to consider, including:

	WLDC Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local property market – types of accommodation available and rental cycles 	<p>Evidence shows that the scheme can be successful using LA / RP stock or PRS stock. When discussed in June 18, Acis Group Director of Operations – Paul Woollam showed support for the initiative and a further meeting on 16th July has been arranged. Also in discussion with The Longhurst Group re provision of accommodation. Families are matched to properties via the Home Office</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of school places 	The latest data suggests there are school places across Lincolnshire, including in many different areas in West Lindsey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to local services and potential transport issues 	Transport and proximity to services is a risk factor. However the scheme has been successful in other rural areas. This would be an important consideration for WLDC and analysis of services and transport links would be required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of local population and existing cohesion issues 	This would be an important consideration. No work has been undertaken to address this. Feedback from the families placed in South and North Kesteven has not created any community tension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of health provision 	GP access could be a challenge and would be an important consideration. The funding tariff and potential to develop a specific mental health offer for the Lincolnshire cohort would be a positive opportunity. LPfT engaged in the wider partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing support and integration 	Support via an experienced provider already delivering in Lincolnshire could be extended to West Lindsey. This would be most successful if the location of a resettled family were near to the district boundary to allow for a cluster of families to be supported. Additionally there may be an important role for the community and voluntary sector to play to enhance this. Experience has also shown that online support networks have been valuable.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The recommendation at this time is to accommodate 2 families to primarily assess demand on resource. Resource to initially arrange facilitation into the property will be intensive albeit short term and will be the responsibility of the Home Choices Team Manager with assistance from the Home Choices team. This will be undertaken as separate duties to the general day to day requirements.
- 6.2 Should East Midlands Councils request a further commitment a further paper will be brought back to committee to ask for delegation to chair and vice chair to decide on specified number of households.
- 6.3 A further paper will be brought back to committee in 3 years to review the scheme.

Appendix 1 – Memorandum of Understanding



Syrian Vulnerable
Persons Resettlement

Appendix 2 - Learnings and experiences from NKDC and SKDC who have participated in the programme.

Housing	Teething problems with properties – i.e. working the heating systems Used LA stock, ensuring that it was good quality and giving consideration to the type of housing the family had previously had (garden was an important consideration, plus minor bathroom adaptations)
Schools / Education	School placements – all children now in school and nursery. Some challenges – issues with birth certificates; led to child aged 2 being placed in pre-school incorrectly initially
Health	GP access has been a challenge Mental health continues to be an issue nationally. £2600 available per refugee available (£600 primary healthcare, £2000 secondary healthcare). £1.5m fund available for East Midlands region. In Derbyshire a specialist MH practitioner has been employed – good success rate. EM Councils keen to take learnings from this model to allow for replication elsewhere. CCG funding may no longer be available post 2020.
Demand on Local Authority	<i>“Primed to have a lot of demands but this hasn’t been our experience so far”</i> Initially labour intensive as a learning process but this has become much easier. We did need to commit staffing resource to oversee this process.
Translation Services	Translation services locally non-existent – this has been a challenge. Resorted to the use of language line. Upbeat Communities (support service) arranged independent translator to attend GP with family
ESOL	A challenge to facilitate access to ESOL classes due to their location and need for tutors to be accredited. Opportunity to access classes in Newark It is likely that funding for this would have to be paid for from District Councils due to the cost of the sessions. This could be determined on per person basis. Current estimates for this are being looked at. The literacy levels of the families resettled require additional work as

	<p>they are not yet at a standard where they can access the ESOL classes. Funding is sought from the monies available but once this has been exhausted this would have to be subsidised by the local authority.</p> <p>However an appropriate location such as Newark would mean families from across a number of districts could attend the same classes reducing the need for separate arrangements which would increase costs.</p>
Community Integration and Cohesion	<p>Online support networks – there is a Facebook community for those that have resettled and this works well</p> <p>Support workers have connections with local Muslim communities</p> <p>Families attending prayer rooms locally</p>
Support	<p>Fire Safety leaflets have been translated. Home Fire Safety Checks offered</p> <p>Flag on property with the police</p> <p>Commissioned specialist provider to deliver support – this has worked really well and seen as key to being successful (See Appendix 2)</p>