

Report Title

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Refugee (VPR) Resettlement Scheme

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Authors

Jackie Mould, Head of Performance Intelligence and Improvement
01709 823618 or jackie.mould@rotherham.gov.uk

Sue Shelley, Business Development Manager
01709 822540 or sue.shelley@rotherham.gov.uk

Wards Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Syrian Resettlement Programme was started in response to the refugee crisis created as a result of the Civil War in Syria. The UK government launched the programme in 2015 and Rotherham committed to becoming a partner in the scheme in May 2016 and to take up to 30 individuals in phase two of the Scheme for a period of three years.

The Government has now written to participating councils proposing extensions to the existing agreements. Approval of this report would give a three year extension to the current scheme on the same terms.

Recommendations

That approval is given to:

- 1 Acknowledgement of the success of the programme to date.
- 2 To extend the initial three year period for a further three years to support another 30 refugees in family units under the under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), subject to the conditions set out in the 26 May 2016 Cabinet approval.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Cabinet Report from 26th May 2016

<http://modgov-p-db/documents/s105775/Item%2018%20-%20Syrian%20VPRS%20Cabinet%20Report%2011-5-16.pdf>

Letter from Immigration Minister, Caroline Nokes, March 2018
Y&H Syrian Resettlement Board Minutes of 2018

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

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- 1.1 The Syrian Resettlement Programme consists of 2 programmes:
- Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)
 - Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)
- 1.2 The Council became a partner in the VPRS in May 2016.
- 1.3 The Syrian Resettlement Programme was started in response to the refugee crisis created as a result of the Civil War in Syria. The Government launched the programme in 2015 and Rotherham committed to becoming a partner in the scheme in May 2016 and to support up to 30 individuals in phase two of the Scheme. This was for an initial three year period subject to annual review. Since the programme started, 6 families, combining 30 individuals have arrived in Rotherham. Two families have relocated to be with other family members in Wakefield and in December 2018 a family of 4 arrived to join their cousin, who was already settled under the programme in Rotherham.
- 1.4 Of those people and families settled in Rotherham:
- One family split up in June 2018 – 4 people moved out of the area;
 - One family of 4 moved to Wakefield in September 2018;
 - One family of 6 moved to Wakefield in October 2018

 - Therefore a total of 14 people have moved out of Rotherham.

 - A family of 4 arrived in December 2018 which means-

 - there are currently 20 refugees in Rotherham on the Syrian Resettlement Programme.
- 1.5 The Immigration Minister wrote to all local authorities asking them to consider resettling more refugees under the Syrian Resettlement Programme in 2018. Local authorities are now being asked to commit to support more refugees under this scheme.
- 1.6 Under the VPRS Programme every family receives intensive support for one year and further support for a another 4 years. The Council is the budget holder for the scheme which is Home Office funded. Regionally this is managed by Migration Yorkshire and support is sub-contracted to the Refugee Council who provide an intensive package of support in year 1 with more limited support in years 2 to 5. Additional funding is provided to ensure educational places are available for children of school age.

Funding from the Home Office in Year 1 is on a per capita per annum rate as set out in the table below:

| | Adults £ | Children 5-18 | Children 3-4 | Children Under 3 |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|

| | | | | |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | £ | £ | £ |
| Rate | 8,520 | 8,520 | 8,520 | 8,520 |
| Education | 0 | 4,500 | 2,250 | 0 |

A maximum of four annual flat rate payments are made in Years 2-5, as set out in the table below.

| | | | | |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Rate | 5,000 | 3,700 | 2,300 | 1,000 |

- The funding for education has been allocated to each school and has been mainly used to support children with language through the employment of staff to support language acquisition

- 1.7 Year 1 of support includes weekly drop-in sessions for advice with an allocated project worker to support with orientation around the area and access to key services, for example, GP's. In addition each adult has a personal integration plan which is regularly reviewed throughout the year to identify and resolve any blockers. Blockers are determined as anything that stops the delivery of the personal integration plan which is designed to make sure the refugees integrate into the communities in which they live. Families are also able to access additional help through some of the specialist services offered, for example, therapeutic support for adults and Family Therapy to support children who may be suffering the effects of trauma.
- 1.8 In Years 2 to 5 families are encouraged to become more independent and self-reliant with the main support being provided through a dedicated phone line. However, the most vulnerable refugees will continue to receive more intensive support from a project worker and other more specialist services.
- 1.9 Through the VPRS, English Language skills are considered very important and additional grant funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is available to commission new provision where needed, which is paid at a flat rate of £850. There is currently formal ESOL provision available through Rotherham College. The Council is waiting for information from the Refugee Council on progression but draft information to date shows that, at this point all but one of the refugees are still at pre-Entry Level for speaking, writing and reading. One refugee has completed his Construction Skills Certification Scheme training with a view to obtaining work in the construction industry.
- 1.10 ESOL project and Family Wellbeing Project

A need for more mental health support for children and young people has been identified and Rotherham have committed to a regional project led by Migration Yorkshire to provide specialist mental health provision. The Home Office have agreed to fund 50% of the cost of this provision with Rotherham's contribution being £190 per person (£5,700 in total). Rotherham's contribution to this scheme will be funded from the Syrian Resettlement Programme grant.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The report to Cabinet in May 2016 identified key issues that remain the same today. These were as set out below.

2.2 Community Engagement.

Locally, the churches and the wider voluntary and community sector are coordinating a local pastoral offer to include a befriending scheme, practical support such as English language conversation clubs and the production of guides to services as part of a “Welcome Pack”.

2.3 Community Integration

Given the status of Syrian Refugees in being able to access all services and support as available to other residents, the key task incumbent on local authorities will be to ensure that those subject to this programme are supported to understand what is expected of them, what is available to them and how to secure employment and contact services for assistance when required. The initial focus is on learning English.

Whilst there is significant goodwill and a wish to help resettled Syrian refugees in the community there is also a potential risk, albeit very small, of victimisation or harassment for any new arrivals. There will be ongoing liaison with South Yorkshire Police on local community policing issues. As part of the integration and orientation process, details of how to contact the police regarding any criminal or anti-social behaviour ASB will be made available to the refugees.

2.4 Strategic oversight and coordination

It is proposed that strategic oversight and coordination is led by the office of the Assistant Chief Executive given the strong policy links to equality, diversity and cohesion which currently fall within the same portfolio. The office would lead on negotiations with Migration Yorkshire, represent the Council at regional and sub-regional planning meetings, co-ordinate the multi-agency officer group, and represent the Council at the local Rotherham Multi-Agency Asylum Group.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 To not take any further refugees under the programme and to gradually reduce the programme of support as families move through the 5 year programme.

3.2 To widen the remit of the partnership to include both the VPRS and the VCRS schemes so that families who come to Rotherham would come from Syria and other countries.

3.3 To extend the initial three year period for a further three years to take another 30 refugees in family units under the Syrian Resettlement Scheme, subject to the conditions set out in the May 2016 Cabinet approval.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The council is a member of the board of Migration Yorkshire the strategic migration partnership for Yorkshire and the Humber, along with other local authorities and there has been wide consultation across the region on taking in other refugees under this programme. Other local authorities are considering this request and a number have already made a positive decision.
- 4.2 The decision to be part of the resettlement scheme was taken by Cabinet in May 2016.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The date proposed for the next group of refugees to arrive in Yorkshire is July 2019. If approval is given to this proposal the Council will work with Migration Yorkshire to plan the timetable for the new arrivals who may arrive on this or other later flights.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The Home Office will allocate a grant towards the resettlement costs of each refugee in a household.
- 6.2 The amount of grant is prescribed with local authorities receiving a five year settlement. In year one, local authorities will receive £8,520 per individual and an additional sum for education based on age cohorts. This is £4,500 for ages 5-18 and £2,250 for ages 3-4. There is no contribution towards Special Education Needs costs. Funding for employability or employment support cannot be funded in year one.
- 6.3 Over years two to five, local authorities will receive a total of £12K per individual as set out in section 1.5 above.
- 6.4 There are no direct procurement implications arising for the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 If the scheme is continued beyond the term of the current contract (in accordance with any contractual requirements) then consideration will need to be given to the scope for extending current arrangements/the entering into a new contract. The Service will liaise with Legal Services and Procurement officers to ensure that arrangements comply with the EU Regulations (if relevant) and the Council's own contract procurement rules (and revisit any existing agreements).
- 7.2 The legal implications were reported to Cabinet 13 September 2016, setting out in full the Council's powers and duties in relation to the scheme. There are no considered further immediate legal implications for consideration at this stage.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no human resource implications

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 This programme directly supports vulnerable adults and their families who are able to settle in Rotherham.

9.2 From the first families to arrive in the region under the programme the need for support to access ESOL and for additional family therapy to support those suffering from the effects of trauma was identified. Rotherham is a partner in the Migration Yorkshire led ESOL project to develop more ESOL resources and the Family Therapy project which is providing family therapy for the children within the families of those on the programme. This is in addition the mental health therapies being provide by the Refugee Council to adults.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 An initial equality analysis has been completed and is attached to this report. Persons settled under the Syrian VPR Scheme would be housed in private rented properties so there would not be an impact on housing waiting lists. They would also be subject to the same consideration as local residents for places at schools, GP and dentist lists and waiting lists for secondary care.

10.2 Syrians have a right to join the Housing Register but would not have any greater priority unless they have specific medical or access needs. They have to go through the normal procedures for health services but Health also has a grant to help cover the costs of treatment.

11. Implications for Partners

11.1 Discussions have been held with both Migration Yorkshire and the Refugee Council about this proposal. Both partners are supportive of this recommendation / report.

12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 If the Council does not continue with the programme, the current support will end in 2 years' time. Continuing with the programme will ensure the continuation of the grant which is used to provide support in relation to need across the life of the programme.

12.2 Level of funding beyond 2020 for the programme is not yet clear – if funding is reduced this could mean the programme could not offer the same level of support with families as is currently offered through the Refugee Council. This risk can be managed through annual review of the scheme.

Accountable Officers

Jackie Mould, Head of Performance Intelligence and Improvement
Sue Shelley, Business Development Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

| | Named Officer | Date |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Chief Executive | | Click here to enter a date. |
| Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer) | Judith Badger | Click here to enter a date. |
| Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) | Dermot Pearson | Click here to enter a date. |
| Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate) | N/A | Click here to enter a date. |
| Head of Procurement (if appropriate) | N/A | Click here to enter a date. |