

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
25 NOVEMBER 2019

SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (SVPRS)

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the successful delivery of the Council's 'Award Winning' resettlement scheme and seek approval to continue with the existing partnership model and proposed pledge for 2020-21, that's in accordance with the requirements set out in the recently announced Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Members will be aware from previous reports to the Committee that on 7 September 2015, the Government pledged to resettle up to 20,000 refugees who have fled Syria over a 5 year period.

2.2 All refugees resettled through this process are assessed and vetted by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the camps that they are currently living in, in countries surrounding Syria. This includes medical assessments and checks regarding affiliation to political parties. It prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin, for example women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence. Those relocated under the scheme will be awarded five years' Humanitarian Protection; meaning they will have access to public funds and employment.

2.3 The Home Office provides funding to local authorities who choose to participate in supporting vulnerable persons brought to the UK under this scheme. A number of outcomes that are to be achieved in a Statement of Requirements includes information about housing, utilities, furnishings and support that should be provided, such as an initial reception, case work support, cultural orientation and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision.

2.4 On 7 November 2016 Members approved the recommendations proposed, vowing to 'to play its part' in the resettlement of Syrian refugees and endorsed:

- a) the Council's commitment to SVPRS and approved the per capita figures of **40-45 individuals (approx. 10 households maximum)** to be resettled in Newark & Sherwood over 5 years;
- b) approved the proposed delivery model to enter into a MoU with Nottingham City Council (NCC) as the accountable body for managing funds from the Home Office and commissioning activities under a Casework Contract and Community Contract in accordance with their Contract and Procedure rules and Data Protection Policy and Protocols; and
- c) approved Councillor B. Laughton, as the then Committee Chairman, to figurehead a letter to mobilise community and voluntary sector partners to support and join a newly formed Newark & Sherwood Resettlement Partnership.

3.0 Newark & Sherwood Update

3.1 With the incredible support of the Newark & Sherwood Resettlement Partnership and the Council's political leadership, the Council has successfully exceeded its original pledge and has resettled **12 families (58 individuals - 26 adults and 32 children)** in Newark & Southwell, with a further family due to arrive in December 2019.

3.2 All families have been accommodated in comfortable homes provided by Registered Providers and Private Sector, furnished to an excellent standard by our partner, the Furniture Project.

3.3 Two local charitable trusts have been set up to provide complimentary support to the families, Support for Syrian Refugees and Support Refugees in Southwell; who have enlisted over 20 volunteers respectively to provide the following invaluable services:

- 1-2-1 befrienders for each family
- Run a Conversation Group
- Provide a monthly women's group with activities
- Organise cultural integration opportunities including trips to London and Skegness
- Provide additional items from donations, including garden and DIY tools, baby equipment etc.

3.4 Home-Start Newark continue to be an invaluable partner, providing:

- 1-2-1 support for parents from a specially selected volunteer
- Homework Help programme which matches a volunteer for each child who is transitioning to secondary education
- Trips out with other local families

3.5 All adults receive ESOL tuition tailored to their individual needs in small classes of between 1-5 learners. This bespoke teaching is delivered by Enable and funded under the scheme. This provision prepares the learners for more formal classes at Newark College where ESOL qualifications can be achieved. 16 adults have now passed their ESOL certificates at various levels up to Level 1. Considering Level 1 is equivalent to a GCSE pass, this is remarkable for learners who have only had primary education, at best. Some face the additional challenge of being illiterate in their own language.

3.6 An overview is provided below in relation to employment, training and work experience:

- 1 adult employed locally in a garage at 24 hours pw
- 4 passed Food Safety Training delivered by NSDC
- 6 now have full UK driving licences (this has been supported by SSR)
- 1 has taken a CSCS course in Construction Safety
- 2 are enrolling on CACHE L2 award in Support Work in Schools
- 6 are being supported by Framework, Opportunity and Change
- Work Experience:
 - 1 at Newark Academy as Teaching Assistant
 - 1 at a local hairdressers
 - 2 at charity shops
 - 1 with local plumber
 - 1 with local painter and decorator

- 1 with Heritage Stonemason
- 1 with Carriages Community café
- 1 with local mobile phone repair shop
- 2 with local café providing a Syrian buffet for 85 people for fundraiser event

3.7 Members will also be aware that our partnership work to resettle Syrian refugee families in Newark & Sherwood was ‘highly commended’ at a prestigious national awards ceremony in London back in June 2019. Judges in the Municipal Journal Achievement Awards 2019 Transforming Lives category praised how the Council’s scheme had been implemented in the district, commending the strong partnership work, passion and innovation of those involved. The Council has worked closely with local community and voluntary sector partners, including Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum to deliver our ‘award winning’ scheme.

4.0 Nottinghamshire Context

4.1 All councils in the County have been working together with the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, to develop a localised programme for resettlement under the leadership of John Robinson, Chief Executive Officer.

4.2 Nottingham City Council has led a consortium of local authorities (including Newark & Sherwood, Gedling, Broxtowe, and Rushcliffe) in the delivery of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. To date, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire has achieved its pledge within time, cost and quality tolerances and have re-settled more Syrian refugees than any other part of the East Midlands. It should be noted that NSDC has resettled the highest number of families amongst the District/Boroughs in the partnership:

Overview						
	NCC	GBC	BBC	RBC	NSDC	Totals
Families	33	10	7	8	12	70
Individuals	121	46	30	31	60	288
Pledge	116	43	42	41	44	286
Progress	104%	107%	71%	76%	136%	101%

4.3 Under the Council’s existing MoU with Nottingham City Council’s (NCC) Community Cohesion Team, and for Home Office funding and counting purposes, our resettlement consortium is counted as one entity. Under the MoU, NCC provide services including partnership management, commissioning and contract management (for casework, employment support and ESOL), administrative support and financial accountability and an 8% management fee is retained by NCC from the grant fund.

4.4 At the current time, the consortium resettlement budget is underspent, largely as a result of the ‘front-loaded’ nature of the Home Office funding model. As income tapers during Years 2-5, it is foreseeable that this underspend will be absorbed. NSDC continues to recharge all expenses incurred to deliver the scheme from the grant funding (under the budget header A10217).

5.0 Proposal for Newark & Sherwood

5.1 With the current resettlement scheme coming to an end, the Home Office has announced a one year extension to resettlement.

5.2 The new scheme will combine all previous schemes (VPRS, VCRS and Gateway Protection schemes), whereby the UK will resettle 5,000 vulnerable refugees over the course of 2020-21, broadening the scope beyond the Middle East and North Africa to encompass global conflict zones. The funding model is to mirror arrangements for the previous scheme. With the Home Office pledging to resettle a further 5,000 refugees in the first year of the new scheme, the consortium's per capita 'share' of the overall total would be as follows:-

Overview						
	NCC	GBC	BBC	RBC	NSDC	Totals
Individuals	25	9	8	9	9	60

5.3 It is not at present known, which authorities will continue to participate, either in resettlement or our consortium partnership.

5.4 With funding due to mirror SVPRS, individuals will receive the funding reflected below:

- Year One: £8,520 per head
- Year Two: £5,000 per head
- Year Three: £3,700 per head
- Year Four: £2,300 per head
- Year Five: £1,000 per head

The funding is not ring-fenced, can be pooled and eligible expenditure includes:

- Furnishing of accommodation and payment of void costs where appropriate
- Casework support
- English language provision for adults (formal and informal)
- Integration activities
- Employment support
- Additional education costs
- Social care costs for adults and children
- Education grants:
 - Young people aged 3-4 receive an additional education fund of £2,250 per head (total of £10,770) during Year One.
 - Young people aged 5-18 receive an additional education fund of £4,500 per head (total of £13,020) during Year One.
 - These funds are vired direct to schools on arrival, and are not typically factored into overall income calculations.
- Exceptional circumstances funding (with no upper limit) can be claimed from the Home Office separate from families' grant funding – in order to do so, the Home Office must first agree on the rationale and amount before a claim can be submitted with evidence. Such claims include; adaptations work and additional school funding.

5.5 It is therefore proposed that the Council continues with the existing partnership/consortium model and agrees to resettle a further 9 individuals (2-3 families) during 2020-21 under the new Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

5.6 The key responsibilities under the MoU for NSDC will remain; to procure appropriate housing stock and identify this to the Home Office for matching under the scheme, escort refugees on arrival to their new accommodation and provide an orientation briefing. We are also required to provide a Single Point of Contact to be responsible for and support delivery of the scheme locally, to ensure families entering the area receive support in compliance with the Statement of Requirements. Reasonable expenditure (including officer time) will be covered by the grant funding available, which includes partnership and community development work. There are no other resulting liabilities to the Council in extending the existing MoU.

5.7 Resettled families will continue to be provided with one-to-one casework and orientation support which is intended to prepare families to live self-sufficiently in the UK (ie. equipped and able to access employment, education, training or universal support services, as applicable) which is delivered by Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum on a grant-aid service level agreement basis with NCC. Within this agreement the Council has recently agreed the standard desk licence fee to enable the caseworker for Newark and Southwell to be based at Castle House 3 days per week.

6.0 Equalities Implications

6.1 The recommendation helps to support vulnerable people with a 'protected characteristic' under the Equalities Act 2010 and therefore has a positive impact on equality and diversity.

7.0 Financial Comment (FIN19-20/2863)

7.1 There is no direct financial impact on Newark and Sherwood as this initiative is wholly funded via the Home Office. Newark and Sherwood have signed consent forms to confirm that NCC will act as the accountable body for the management of the regional funding pot related to arrivals in Newark and Sherwood under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- a) **the Committee endorse the Council's ongoing commitment to resettlement;**
- b) **agree to re-settle in the region of a further 9 individuals (approx. 2/3 families) in line with Newark and Sherwood's per capita share of the 5,000 national target, the precise number to be agreed by the Business Manager, Housing, Health and Community Relations following consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson; and**
- c) **the successful local partnership delivery model should continue and that the MoU with Nottingham City Council as the accountable body for managing funds from the Home Office and commissioning activities in accordance with their Contract and Procedure rules and GDPR Policy and Protocols be extended for a further year, until March 2021.**

Reason for Recommendations

To demonstrate the Council's support to a particularly vulnerable people group in line with a national re-settlement scheme and in keeping with Council's values to demonstrate genuine care and compassion.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information, please contact Leanne Monger, Business Manager – Housing, Health & Community Relations on extension 5545

John Robinson
Chief Executive