

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 JULY 2022		
TITLE:	UK RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES - CASE SUPPORT AND INTEGRATION PROVISION 2022 -2027		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	JASON BROCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADER
SERVICE:	POLICY AND FUNDING	WARDS:	BOROUGH-WIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	CLARE MUIR	TEL:	0118 9372119
JOB TITLE:	POLICY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Clare.muir@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Since 2016 Reading Borough Council has been supporting the Government's Resettlement programmes. Initially, by committing to offer homes and support to 3 families a year through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (renamed UK Resettlement Schemes [UKRS] and, since September 2021, offering homes and support to families resettled through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. The Homes for Ukraine scheme is not organised as a formal Resettlement Scheme and is beyond the remit of this report and decision.
- 1.2 The Government's policy statement New Plan for Immigration, March 2021 states 'The UK's commitment to resettling refugees will continue to be a multi-year commitment with numbers subject to ongoing review guided by circumstances and capacity at any given time.' This indicates that LAs will continue to be asked to commit to resettlement year on year.
- 1.2 It is proposed that the Council reaffirms its commitment to the UK Resettlement Schemes beyond 21/22, with an offer to resettle an average of 2-3 families/2-3 houses (c.10 individuals) a year, subject to availability of appropriate housing and that the Council contracts an external provider to provide case and integration support to families arriving through Government resettlement schemes for the period 2022-2027.
- 1.3 Members are asked to give the Assistant Director for Corporate Improvement and Customer Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, authority to award a contract for provision of case work support and integration support.
- 1.4 Appendices
Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Council continues to participate in the Government's Refugee Resettlement Schemes with an offer to receive an average of 2-3 families a year from 2022.
- 2.2 That members delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Corporate Improvement and Customer Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to award a 5-year contract from 1st December 2022, for provision of case work support and integration support to the value of £42,000 per annum, with a total value of £210,000.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 RBC's Policy Committee, 18th January 2016, agreed that the Council would make an indicative offer to accept 3 families per year for 5 years under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (renamed UK Resettlement Schemes, UKRS in 2017). It was confirmed, following a review, at Policy Committee on 16th January 2017 that the Council would continue receiving 3 families a year until 2021 and because of the significant pressure on housing, the decision was to place refugee families in private sector rented housing sourced through the Council's Rent Guarantee Scheme.
- 3.2 The Government's policy statement New Plan for Immigration, March 2021, states 'The UK's commitment to resettling refugees will continue to be a multi-year commitment with numbers subject to ongoing review guided by circumstances and capacity at any given time.' This indicates that LAs will continue to be asked to commit to resettlement year on year.
- 3.3 Subsequently, the Government called on Local Authorities to participate in the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. In response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, the Government also asked LAs to support the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme, but this is not formally a Resettlement Scheme and not within the remit of this Policy Committee decision.
- 3.4 Per capita funding is tapered, over a 5-year period for the UK Resettlement Schemes (Table 1) and 3 years for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (Table 2) and is provided to the local authority. For the first 12 months of an individual's arrival the funding is:

	Adult Benefit Claimant £	Other Adults £	Children 5-18 £	Children 3-4 £	Children U-3 £
Local Authority Unit Cost	8,520	8,520	8,520	8,520	8,520
Education	0	0	4,500	2,250	0
TOTALS	8,520	8,520	13,020	10,770	8,520

	Adult Benefit Claimant £	Other Adults £	Children 5-18 £	Children 3-4 £	Children U-3 £
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Local Authority Unit Cost	10,500	10,500	10,500	10,500	10,500
Education	0	0	4,500	2,250	0
TOTALS	10,500	10,500	15,000	12,750	10,500

3.5 The Year 1 funding requires the Local Authority to meet the Home Office Statement of Outcomes to support the individual. Funding for further years is not ring-fenced and is used flexibly to support the families' continuing needs.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

4.1.1 To date the Council has resettled 10 families/55 individuals through the UKRS. The frequency at which we can accept families is dependent on appropriate houses becoming available. Houses are sourced through the Rent Guarantee Scheme. The Covid 19 pandemic caused all refugee arrivals to be cancelled from March 2020 until March 2021.

4.1.2 Through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme the Council has resettled 16 families. Properties for the Afghan Resettlement emergency were provided through additional offers from private landlords through the Rent Guarantee Scheme (2), Southern Housing Association (11) and the Council's housing stock (3). It was not expected that resettlement at that level will be ongoing, although sudden changes can occur in response to global events.

4.1.4 Government funding through the resettlement schemes is generally adequate to meet the Home Office Statement of Outcomes, including case and integration support costs, and additional Housing and care costs incurred. Where families incur substantial extra costs (medical or care) in their first 12 months the Home Office will consider additional payment. Further funding of £850 for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) costs is provided per adult.

4.1.4 Funding provided to the LA in Years 2-5 of the resettlement schemes, is not ring-fenced but as families continue to have financial and support needs the funding is called on to support these needs where necessary. In addition, £35k of this funding is allocated to the Narrowing the Gap (Closing the Gap) commissioning budget to support services that families can draw on as they continue their integration journey.

4.1.3 For the UK Resettlement Schemes, the Council contracts an expert case support provider to deliver the first 12 months intensive case and integration support that is set out in the Home Office Statement of Outcomes. The current provider is Reading Refugee Support Group. The contract ends on 30th November 2022.

4.2 Options Proposed

4.2.1 Based on our current experience, finding 2-3 houses a year for Refugee Resettlement is a challenge, but achievable, and would enable the Council to resettle an average of c.10 individuals per annum.

4.2.2 It is proposed that the Council reaffirms its commitment to the UK Resettlement Schemes beyond 21/22, with an offer to resettle an average of 2-3 families/2-3 houses (c.10 individuals) a year, subject to availability of appropriate housing.

4.2.3 It is proposed that the Council procures an external provider to provide case and integration support for families arriving through Government resettlement scheme for

the period 1st December 2022 - 30th November 2027. This will include providing intensive support for the first 12 months for those arriving through resettlement schemes and where families require it, continuing support at a less intensive level beyond 12 months.

- 4.2.4 Due to the uncertain duration of the scheme, and the more general model of support through advice and referrals, it is not proposed to include the Homes for Ukraine support in this procurement.

4.3 Other Options Considered

4.3.1 Deliver in house

Whilst co-ordination of the scheme and securing of properties is undertaken in house, the Council has limited ability to provide case and integration support in house and does not have the specialist refugee expertise and experience. The specification also requires connection with the local community and solicitation and management of donations and other community help. This is far better placed with an external organisation with existing connections with the charitable, community and voluntary sector which can maximise the goodwill offering from the local community.

4.3.2 Berkshire LAs contract

Other Berkshire councils have been approached regarding the potential joint commissioning of support but there has not been any interest.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The proposals in this report contribute to the Corporate Plan Thriving Communities theme to tackle inequality in our society, to ensure everyone has an equal chance to thrive whatever their economic, social, cultural, ethnic, or religious background. It prioritises the needs of the most marginalised groups and the most vulnerable adults and children in our communities.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Climate Impact Assessment has been undertaken and there are no environmental or climate implications arising from the decision.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The procurement process will include an invitation to interested parties to a consultation meeting, the proposed specification is informed by feedback from the provider on experience of the current contract and the feedback they collect from service users on their experience and needs.
- 7.2 The contract will include a requirement for the contractor to engage with the community to source donations, to engage with faith and other communities in Reading to support families' integration.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment on the decision to participate in the SVPR programme was provided to Policy Committee on 18 January 2016 (Minute 67 refers).
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this decision and has identified a positive impact for those protected under the Equality Act 2010.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Contracts Procedure Rules adopted by Council 16 October 2018 CPR9 state that contracts of value £100,000 - £499,999 should be awarded through tenders sought through the Open/ Light Touch Regime. Authority to award is through a formal decision of a Director; OR a formal decision of Council or Committee; OR by an officer with an appropriate delegated Authority as set out in the Delegations Register or delegated specifically by a formal decision of Council or Committee.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The funding for the contract is through the Government's UK Resettlement Schemes, UKRS and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Programmes.

10.2 Estimated cost of resettlement case and integration support for a family of 5 is set out in Table 3:

Table 3	Year 1 Cost £	Year 2 Cost £	Year 1&2 Cost £
Case support contract for family of 5 (Year 2 support where needed)	13,750	4,500	
Extra support needs where agreed	2,500		
Total	16,250	4,500	20,750

4.2.5 The overall Reading Borough Council budget for a family of 5 including the contract for Support and Integration and Management* is set out in Table 4

Table 4		
Estimated cost for Reading Borough Council	Year 1 Estimate per family of 5 £	Year 2 Estimate per family of 5 £
Void costs	4,000	0
Additional housing costs - top up to meet Benefit Cap deficit, furnishing	7,000	7,000
Notional Homecare/extra support for one family member £7,000	7,000	
Contract for Support and Integration and Management*	16,250	4,500
Additional pre-benefit payments	2,700	
Additional ESOL costs	5,000	
RBC Management 10%	4,260	3,000
Total Cost	41,950	15,500
Government funding	42,600	25,000

4.2.6 The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below: -

Revenue Implications

Table 1 sets out the revenue implications.

Table 1	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	TOTAL £000
Expenditure						
Resettlement case and integration support	42	42	42	42	42	210
Total Expenditure	42	42	42	42	42	210
Income from: Government Grant	42	42	42	42	42	210
Total Income	42	42	42	42	42	210
Net Cost (+)/saving (-)	0	0	0	0	0	0

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Specification of current contract

11.2 Funding Instruction for local authorities in the support of the United Kingdom's Resettlement Schemes Financial Year 2021-2022, Home Office, 8 April 2021

11.3 Funding Instruction for local authorities in the support of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (1 September 2021 - 31 March 2022), Home Office, 18 November 2021

11.4 Homes for Ukraine: guidance for councils, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 18 March 2022