

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Housing and Environment

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To: CABINET

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Global Resettlement Scheme and Asylum Dispersal Scheme

Recommendation

- (a) that Cabinet decides whether to participate in either or both schemes details of which are set out in this report.
- (b) that if Cabinet decides to participate in the Global Resettlement Scheme officers recommend that the council could accept three families within the current service design.
- (c) that if Cabinet decides to participate in either or both schemes officers recommend a review after one year.

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Cabinet with an appraisal of options for participation in the Government's Global Resettlement Scheme and Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

Background

2. On 26 July 2019, the Housing Needs Manager met with representatives of the Home Office; South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM); and a Registered Housing Provider to discuss the potential participation of the council in the Global Resettlement Scheme and the Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

Global Resettlement Scheme

3. On 17 June 2019, the Government announced its commitment to a new Global Resettlement Scheme. The scheme will continue to resettle the most vulnerable refugees into the United Kingdom but will have a wider geographic focus than previous schemes.
4. The Global Resettlement Scheme replaces previous refugee schemes, including the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS).
5. South Oxfordshire District Council successfully participated in SVPRS. In 2016 the council pledged to resettle two families under the scheme. On arrival in the UK the families received intensive support in their new homes and quickly settled in the local area. The council provides ongoing support to these families who continue to reside in the district.
6. The new Global Resettlement Scheme (GRS) aims to resettle 5,000 refugees in the UK during its first year. There will be funding available to participating authorities at the current funding rates, however the new scheme has only been confirmed for one year. The five-year funding will be available for families arriving before April 2021.
7. SESPM has approached the council to participate in the new Global Resettlement Scheme. Participation in the scheme is voluntary, and the council decides how many families, if any, it will pledge to resettle in the district.

Operation of the Global Resettlement Scheme

8. The selection of refugees for the resettlement scheme is undertaken by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR and the Home Office screen families to confirm their identity and their suitability for the scheme.
9. The families will receive “Humanitarian Protection” leave to stay for five years. They will have recourse to public funds and will be entitled to work and access services in the UK, including housing. At the end of their five-year protected status the family can apply for indefinite leave to remain.
10. The families resettled under GRS are likely to be vulnerable and require a high level of support in the UK. The council would have a choice of the families that are accommodated.
11. The housing needs team would be responsible for managing GRS. This would include sourcing private rented accommodation for the families and arranging support packages to help them settle successfully in the district.
12. The families would receive an initial period of intensive support on arrival (Phase 1), followed by a period of housing support for at least 12 months. (Phase 2).

13. The table below summarises the support the families would receive as part of the resettlement process.

Phase 1	• Attend multi-agency meetings pre-arrival
	• Meet and collect the family at the airport
	• Ensure that the households have all the essentials, including food, drink and clothing from day one.
	• Provide a welcome pack
	• Source essential household items including bedding and kitchen utensils
	• Accompany the family to sign-up and provide health & safety briefing
	• Complete and submit personal and housing benefit claims
	• Introduce and orientate family to local amenities, services and support networks
	• Provide translation and a language assessment
	• Arrange English language classes
	• Secure school places for the children
	• Refer to health services and to Adult and Children services as required
Phase 2	• Tenancy support, including housing benefit claims
	• Welfare support, including ID and benefit claims
	• Money Management, including banking
	• Signposting and referral to other agencies as appropriate
	• Assistance with translation and interpretation
	• Help with access to health and education services
	• Training and employment support, including help with CV's
	• Support to find alternative accommodation if required

14. The families would continue to receive support after Phase 2 from the council and support agencies. The type of support offered will depend upon the needs of the individual families and will be funded by the scheme.

Scheme funding

15. The Government provides funding to councils for participation in GRS. The funding is based upon a fixed sum for each member of the household, for a period of five years.

16. The table below is an illustration of the funding available to accommodate either three or six four-person families.

Year	£ per household member	£ per four-person family	£ maximum claim for three families	£ maximum claim for six families
Year 1	8,520	34,080	102,240	204,480
Year 2	5,000	20,000	60,000	120,000
Year 3	3,700	14,800	44,400	88,800
Year 4	2,300	9,200	27,600	55,200
Year 5	1,000	4,000	12,000	24,000
Total	20,520	82,080	246,240	492,480

Scheme costs

17. The table below illustrates the indicative costs to accommodate and support three or six refugee families¹ over the five-year period. The actual costs of the scheme would be dependent upon the arrangements with individual landlords and support providers.

Description	£ estimated expenditure over 5 years for three families	£ estimated expenditure over 5 years for six families
Property costs	47,000	94,000
Support contract (two years)	71,000	142,000
Other support costs (eg. transport, language lessons)	31,000	62,000
0.5FTE Support Officer, including on-costs (two-year fixed term contract)	46,000	92,000
Management costs	12,000	24,000
Total	207,000	414,000

18. The scheme costs and available funding is dependent upon the number of families the council may pledge to resettle. The council could support three families within the existing service design.

19. The full cost of the Global Resettlement Scheme will be recovered from the available funding.

¹ The families would be four person households.

Asylum Dispersal Scheme

20. There is an insufficient supply of accommodation for individuals and families who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. The Home Office are seeking to work with more local authorities over a wider geographic area to provide accommodation and support for asylum seekers. All local authorities have been approached for assistance.
21. The Home Office is seeking an “agreement in principle” from local authorities that would permit an accommodation provider (Clearsprings Ready Homes Ltd) to source accommodation for asylum seekers in South Oxfordshire. Clearsprings Ready Homes are contracted by the Home Office to source and manage accommodation for asylum seekers in the South East of England.
22. The Home Office has not predetermined the number of asylum seekers to be accommodated within a district. As a guide, they would be looking to accommodate up to 25 people in four to five properties. The Home Office have emphasised that they are keen to work with councils to build participation in the scheme at a pace and scale acceptable to both parties.
23. Under the Immigration Act 1999, the Home Office has the statutory power to require local authorities to participate in the Asylum Dispersal Scheme, however they would prefer to work with councils on a voluntary basis.

Operation of the Asylum Dispersal Scheme

24. All persons seeking asylum are subject to third country screening and security checks. The security checks are designed to identify individuals involved in serious criminal activity, including terrorism.
25. Asylum Seekers are not normally entitled to work or receive benefits and are directly funded by UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI).
26. UKVI has a contract with Clearsprings Ready Homes to provide asylum seeker accommodation. Clearsprings are required to submit any proposal to procure a property to the council for approval.
27. UKVI has the power to overrule an objection by the council to the procurement of a property, however this power has never been used. The council will have an influence over the location and number of properties secured. The council will not have an influence over which asylum seekers are accommodated.
28. UKVI has a contract with Migrant Help to support asylum seekers. This support includes assistance with benefits and housing if they are granted asylum. The service is normally provided remotely, although outreach support can be arranged.
29. UKVI normally make an initial decision on a straightforward asylum claim within six months. There are two possible outcomes. A grant of protection (usually five years) or refusal. Approximately 70 per cent of applications are initially refused.
30. Applicants granted asylum will receive 28 days’ notice to vacate their accommodation. The housing provider will inform the council and assist the refugee to secure alternative accommodation.

31. There is a risk that a person granted asylum may approach the council for housing assistance at the termination of their accommodation. In these circumstances the council would complete a homelessness assessment. If the applicant is assessed as being in priority need, i.e. vulnerable in accordance with the 1996 Housing Act Part VII, the council would have a duty to provide temporary accommodation. The housing needs team would then work with the applicant to secure sustainable housing.
32. Asylum Seekers who have their applications refused and have exhausted the appeals process are not eligible for housing assistance. A refused asylum seeker is expected to return to their country of origin. If a refused asylum seeker approached the council for housing assistance, they would be referred to either Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care or local asylum charities for assistance.
33. The Home Office has advised that in their experience asylum seekers who are either granted or refused asylum are unlikely to remain in a rural district. The likelihood is they will move to cities where they may receive support from their local communities

Options and risks

If a) Do not participate in either scheme

Benefits:

- There will be no potential risks associated with participation in either GRS or ADS.
- There will be no additional demands placed upon the council that may have impacted upon the delivery of corporate priorities.

Risks:

- The Home Office has a statutory power to mandate local authorities to participate in the Asylum Dispersal Scheme. Their current position is they want to work with councils on a voluntary basis. They have advised however that if they did exercise this power it would be focussed upon non-participating councils.
- If the Home Office exercised its power to mandate the council to participate in the scheme, the council would not be able to influence the pace and scale of its participation in the scheme.
- The council may receive adverse publicity by not participating in the schemes.

b) Participate only in the Global Resettlement Scheme

Benefits:

- The council will be helping highly vulnerable refugee families seeking resettlement in the United Kingdom.
- The council will be assisting the Home Office in achieving its target for resettling refugee families in the United Kingdom.

- The council may receive positive publicity by participating in GRS.

Risks:

- The additional demands placed upon the council may impact upon the delivery of other corporate priorities. This would be mitigated by employing a dedicated support officer to co-ordinate the scheme.
- Persons in the local population may resent refugees receiving housing assistance at a time when there is a shortage of affordable housing.
- The council is unable to fulfil its pledge to resettle refugee families. In mitigation, the housing needs team are confident that three families could be accommodated within existing service design.
- The families do not resettle successfully in the district. The families may have unrealistic expectations or are not able to adjust to their new environment.
- Parents may separate after their arrival in the UK and require additional housing support.
- There is the possibility of refugee families engaging in or becoming victims of anti-social behaviour.

The level of risk increases with the number of families pledged to be resettled under the scheme.

c) Participate only in the Asylum Dispersal Scheme

Benefits:

- The council will be helping asylum seekers in the United Kingdom.
- The council will be assisting the Home Office with its responsibilities to accommodate and support asylum seekers.

Risks:

- The council will not be responsible for sourcing or managing the accommodation provided.
- The council will not be directly involved in supporting the asylum seekers.
- There is the possibility of asylum seekers engaging in or becoming victims of anti-social behaviour. Asylum Seekers may also be at risk of modern slavery.
- Asylum Seekers granted asylum may approach the council as homeless.
- Asylum Seekers refused asylum may become destitute in the district.

- The council will not be able to access funding from the Global Resettlement Scheme to assist refugees who have been granted asylum. This cross subsidy is permitted under the funding conditions of the Global Resettlement Scheme.

d) Participate in both schemes

Additional Benefits:

- The council will be helping both refugee families and asylum seekers.
- The council will be able to access funding from the Global Resettlement Scheme to assist asylum seekers who have been granted asylum.

Additional Risks:

- The additional demands placed upon the council by participating in both schemes may impact upon the delivery of other corporate priorities. This would be mitigated by employing a dedicated support officer to co-ordinate the GRS.

Financial Implications

34. The full cost of the Global Resettlement Scheme will be recovered from the available funding.

35. There are no financial costs incurred from participating in the Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

Legal Implications

36. There are no legal implications arising from participation in the Global Resettlement Scheme.

37. Under the Immigration Act 1999, the Home Office has the statutory power to require local authorities to participate in the Asylum Dispersal Scheme, however they would prefer to work with councils on a voluntary basis and do not currently have any plans to enforce this power

Other implications

38. None

Conclusion

39. This paper sets out the options available to the council for participation in the Global Resettlement Scheme and the Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

40. The paper advises Cabinet that if the council decides to participate in the Global Resettlement Scheme, three families could be supported within existing service design.

Background Papers

- None