
To: Leadership Board

On: 4 December 2019

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Refugee Resettlement Programmes

1. Summary

- 1.1 Renfrewshire Council has supported national refugee resettlement programmes since 2015, participating in both the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme initially and subsequently the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme from 2017. Funding is received from the UK government to support the resettlement process, and at a local level, services and partners have built up considerable expertise in terms of supporting the resettlement of vulnerable refugees within local communities.
- 1.2 Participation in both schemes has now reached natural review points set by the Leadership Board, and approval is being sought to extend participation for a further two years.
- 1.3 Elected members are asked to note that in June 2019, the UK Government announced that a new single resettlement programme would replace these schemes, potentially from 2020. The scheme will also be extended to support resettlement of vulnerable people to those most at risk, and will not be limited to people with Syrian nationality. Officers will continue to review participation in the schemes, as these transition to new arrangements.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that elected members:
- 2.2 agree to extend the Council's participation in both the Vulnerable People's Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement schemes for a further period of 2 years;
- 2.3 note that this is subject to planned changes to the national schemes, with arrangements being kept under regular review by officers.

3. Background

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council has supported refugee resettlement for a number of years, more recently formally participating in both the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, in addition to supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving spontaneously in the area.
- 3.2 Services have used the associated funding received from the UK Government to develop specialist approaches to service delivery, and have developed real expertise with partners in terms of providing support for resettlement.
- 3.3 In addition to formal participation in the two schemes outlined in section 3.1, services also support a small number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Renfrewshire. The expertise and partnership links that have been established in supporting people through the refugee resettlement scheme, have also been utilised to ensure effective support is provided to this vulnerable group of young people.

4 Syrian Resettlement Scheme

- 4.1 In September 2015, the Council agreed to formally participate in the UK Government's Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) which allows Syrian people affected by the humanitarian crisis to come to the UK and hold refugee status. This status allows Syrian people to live in the UK for up to 5 years and entitles refugees to access benefits and employment.

- 4.2 The Council receives funding from the UK Government to support individuals to successfully settle and integrate within local communities. This is broadly allocated and payable against education, social care costs, health costs and all other local authority costs and is tapered over a 5 year basis. The Council fulfils a critical lead role in terms of co-ordinating the support required by the refugees from Council services and from other agencies e.g DWP, Jobcentre, NHS and further education placements.
- 4.3 Since November 2015, a total of 162 Syrian Refugees have been resettled in Renfrewshire. Families are registered and attending various health services, including GP and Dental Practices, and are integrating well within communities across Renfrewshire undertaking employment training, and education placements.
- 4.4 In September 2017, the Leadership Board agreed to extend Renfrewshire Council's participation in VPRS for a further two years from November 2019. Further approval is now required and is being requested for a further period of 2 years, in order to allow services to continue to formally accept resettlement cases.

5. Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme

- 5.1 This scheme was established several years ago to offer resettlement to children at high risk of harm and exploitation, along with their families. The children are identified by the United Nations as being most in need, and are often resettled to the UK from refugees camps and other unsafe environments across the Middle East and North Africa.
- 5.2 Renfrewshire Council receives funding from the Home Office in respect of children and young people living here under the VCRS scheme. All of Renfrewshire's VCRS cases are funded at the same level as unaccompanied asylum seeking children; this is currently £798 per week, per child for those aged under 18, and £200 per week for those aged over 18. A review of the rates for care leavers is ongoing, and in relation to the term of the funding given legislation in Scotland pertaining to the rights of care leavers.
- 5.3 In December 2017, the Leadership Board homologated approval for Children's Services to accept two family groups as part of the VCRS, in order to respond to a request by the UK Government to support urgent cases. The Board also gave approval for Children's Services to consider further VCRS cases for resettlement for a period of two years from the date of that Board. Further approval is now required and is

being requested for a further period of 2 years, in order to allow services to continue to formally accept resettlement cases.

6. Proposed future changes to resettlement schemes in operation

- 6.1 In June 2019, the UK Government announced that it would continue to support the resettlement of displaced vulnerable people once the current schemes come to an end during 2020. The VPRS and VCRS schemes will merge with the Gateway Protection Programme (a long-running UK refugee resettlement programme involving 18 local authorities) to form a single resettlement programme. The new scheme will not be subject to the same geographic restrictions as the VPRS and VCRS. The UK Government aims to resettle around 5000 people during 2020-21. At its June 2019 meeting, COSLA Leaders affirmed their willingness to participate in this scheme, however further detail on its operation is still being developed and shared. Officers will continue to review these plans as these emerge.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – as outlined in this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – as outlined in the report.
3. **Community Planning** – There are implications and opportunities for local communities as the refugees integrate within local communities. Council officers will work with local communities and partner organisations to support successful integration
4. **Legal** - none.
5. **Property/Assets** – none.
6. **Information Technology** – none.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – none.
 - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and

the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – none.
9. **Procurement** – none.
10. **Risk** - none.
11. **Privacy Impact** – none.
12. **COSLA** - COSLA supports the resettlement of refugees and unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and acts as a central point of contact for the Home Office in relation to Scottish local authorities.
- 13 **Climate Risk** - none

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