

# AFGHANISTAN RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES

Community Connections



## CONTEXT

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) are Home Office managed migration schemes to relocate:

- Afghan Civilian Personnel who have been employed by the Ministry of Defence in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013;
- Afghan Citizens who may be at particular risk because they have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk.

The Home Office recently announced its aim to resettle 5000 people in the first year of these Schemes and 20,000 in total over the next 5 years with funding arrangements aligned to current Refugee Resettlement Schemes. Plymouth City Council has resettled 215 refugees through these existing Schemes since 2015 and has commissioned an integration support package for people as they arrive into the city.

## RECOMMENDED DECISION

Plymouth City Council recognise that: this is a high priority for the Home Office; the Council has previously participated in similar schemes; Plymouth has strong connections with the Armed Forces; and is consistent with the commitment to promote Plymouth as a Welcoming City and the corporate values of collaboration, fairness and responsibility. The recommendation is that the City will commit to:

- Resettling up to 60 people in the first year of the programme (September 2021 –September 2022).
- Resettle up to 50 people per year for the duration of the Schemes to support the Home Office to meet its target of 20,000 Afghans across a 5 year period.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This is a full cost recovery model. Costs are covered by a tariff, which provides £20,000 per person, this consists of a decreasing annual amount for 3 years after the date of arrival in the UK.

Additional funds are made available to cover Health and Social Care costs and Education costs.

An 'extreme cases fund' is available to cover the costs of individuals with more complex needs as well as to support higher rents and mitigate the impact of the benefits cap for larger families requiring 4+ bed properties.

The funding can be pooled across the families and LA's are not required to report breakdown spend per family. The tariff automatically becomes available once the family arrives and unless there is a material change in circumstances e.g. the family moves out of area or return back to their country of origin, PCC are entitled to claim across the 5 year period.

Providing the LA can demonstrate that they are meeting the HO requirements for each family at the two evaluation points (Spring/Autumn following arrival) there are no further reporting requirements.

The funding is sufficient to cover all foreseeable circumstances and the number of families we are proposing to take provides a good level of contingency to deal with unforeseen issues. Through the

Refugee Integration Service contract the City is able to offer support to all refugees in the City, including those receiving leave to remain via the asylum process. There is a greater level of support available to Scheme Families as the grant is ring-fenced, however, it has also enabled service providers to provide a wider service to those in need.

## **RISKS AND MITIGATION**

Insufficient places generated nationally could lead to the HO commitment not being fulfilled and possibly a compulsory dispersal programme. This would mean less control for PCC over the size/arrival regularity of families accepted. The national commitment for 20/21 is 5000. Setting our obligation as 60 would be a slightly higher ratio (1.2%) than the current City commitment against national requirements. There is a further risk that we are unable to meet our commitment and thus difficult to guarantee funding levels for supporting partners. The commitment has been set at 60 individuals in the first year to minimise this risk and to ensure there is not an undue pressure on housing stock.

PCC has opted to accommodate the families within the private housing sector at Local Housing Allowance rates to ensure properties are affordable for families. There are substantial benefits to encourage landlords to participate in the scheme including contribution to minor improvements (e.g. heating/decorating) to ensure the property is fit for rental, void costs to cover council tax and rent whilst awaiting arrival, 2 months' rent in advance and deposit. We have been able to improve the standard of a number of properties in this way having a positive impact on the private rental sector when the families decide to move on. Further funding is available to landlords offering 4+ bed properties to mitigate the impact of the benefits cap and housing improvements required to accommodate a particular need. Support to landlords to participate in the scheme has helped to improve standards in a number of properties to date. These properties may have otherwise not met Local Housing Standards and remained unfilled, these properties will eventually be returned to the wider private rented sector increasing housing capacity for Plymouth residents.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Daily project management will be through the Community Connections team who will monitor the financial spend and provide regular monitoring reports to the Portfolio Holder.

The health and education elements would be managed through strong partnership with the NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group and the Special Educational Needs and Disability team. A project steering group would be established to reflect this and engage all internal and external partners. This will ensure the Home Office Statement of Requirements is met.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a collaborative Council, this programme is consistent with our values as a council that takes local and global responsibility, and a caring council that promotes social and health equality.

The cost profile provided by the Home Office will seek to minimise our exposure to unfunded costs and pay for additional capacity to meet needs.

We will strike a fair balance between meeting the needs of refugees and those of the already resident community. In the long term refugees will benefit the whole community through their economic contribution and by increasing the diversity of our city. We will seek to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.