

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

5 JULY 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL & PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

PARTICIPATION IN THE UK GOVERNMENT'S SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To seek approval from Cabinet to participate in the UK Government's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme; endorse the planning assumptions in section 4.4 for delivery of the Programme and secure support for the families as outlined within the report in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 The report contributes to the following outcomes within the Corporate Plan 2016-20:
- Helping people to become more self-reliant
- 2.2 The report contributes to the following goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:
- A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A globally responsive Wales

3. Background

- 3.1 The UN estimated that as of February 2015 12.2 million people are in need of humanitarian aid within Syria. At least 7.6 million people in Syria have been forced to flee their homes and there are some 3.8 million refugees in neighbouring countries. The UK Government has committed to resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees in the lifetime of this Parliament and is seeking local authorities to participate in the Programme.
- 3.2 The number of refugees likely to be received in Wales is 1,000 to 1,500 over the five years of the Programme, however it should be noted that participation in the Programme is voluntary. Four Welsh authorities (Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen) participated in Phase 1 and between them received and settled just under 50 refugees before Christmas 2015. Phase 2 of the Programme began in April 2016 and all Welsh authorities are now/have agreed to participate in the Programme.
- 3.3 Those Syrian refugees resettled in the UK are allowed to bring their immediate family with them. This is limited to one spouse / partner (who must be over 18) and their minor dependant children (under 18 and not living an independent life). There

is no provision to allow applicants to bring over-age dependant relatives unless they also meet the vulnerability criteria in their own right or the Home Office is satisfied that there is an existing dependency. Generally, families will comprise of between 4-6 people (inclusive of the head of family).

- 3.4 The Programme prioritises help for survivors of torture and violence, women and children at risk, and those in need of medical care. All applicants (including accompanying family members) are subject to the usual immigration checks and screening prior to a visa being granted. Those with a criminal past or links to war crimes or extremism are excluded from the scheme. Settlement may be refused if the person is convicted of a criminal offence during their leave and will be refused if they pose a danger to the public, or to national security. Leave to remain can also be curtailed if such evidence comes to light during the initial 5 year period. Settlement can be revoked if evidence emerges after it has been granted.
- 3.5 Individuals are granted humanitarian protection giving them leave to remain for 5 years with full access to employment and public funds and rights to family reunion comparable to refugees. At the end of the 5 years, if they have not been able to return to Syria, they may be eligible to apply for settlement in the UK.
- 3.6 Local authorities who choose to participate in the scheme take the lead in working with other key local partners to ensure that arrivals are provided with suitable accommodation and the specific needs of these vulnerable individuals are met. Consideration will also need to be given to bringing in specialist support providers subject to individuals' specific requirements.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 A multi-disciplinary / multi-agency meeting chaired by BCBC Chief Executive was held on 7th December 2015 to assess appropriateness, accessibility and availability of key services in delivering the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme within Bridgend County Borough. The multi-agency meeting consisted of representatives from Bridgend County Borough Council (including Cabinet Member for Communities, Housing, Community Safety on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership, Benefits, Education, Social Services (adults and children), Safeguarding and Communication); the Department for Work and Pensions; Jobcentre Plus; the Bridgend Association of Voluntary Agencies (BAVO); South Wales Police; the Community Cohesion Coordinator; Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) V2C, Hafod, Linc Cymru and Wales and West; and Primary Health Care and GPs (Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU)).
- 4.2 The meeting discussed key themes which were; Housing & Support; Education; Community Cohesion; Social Services / Safeguarding; DWP / Job Centre Plus; Health; Interpretation / Translation and; Communication. Having regard to the availability of appropriate services and support locally, the following approach is recommended:
 - an over-arching Steering Group (initially chaired by South Wales Police) be established to make decisions on resettlement and monitor the delivery of the programme;
 - an Operational Group (chaired by the Operational Lead nominated and managed from Housing and Community Regeneration) be established for mobilisation and

delivery. Any escalating issues to be reported to the Steering Group consisting of nominees from the Multi-Agency Meeting;

- Support to be commissioned utilising Home Office funding set on a tariff basis per person for a 12 month period for each family. If the tariff per person is deemed not sufficient for an individual case due to high support needs, this will be subject to separate negotiations with the national co-ordinator. The Operational Group will draft a service specification for the support in consultation with the Supporting People Team and Procurement.

4.3 The minimum support requirements to be provided by the support provider, as specified by the Home Office are as follows. These will be provided through a combination of office based appointments, drop in sessions, outreach surgeries and home visits:

4.3.1 Greet arriving Beneficiaries from the relevant airport and escort them to their properties briefing them on how to use the amenities

4.3.2 Ensure that the Beneficiaries are registered with utility companies and ensure that arrangements for payments are put in place (no pre pay/card accounts)

4.3.3 Provide briefings on the accommodation and health and safety issues for all new arrivals including the provision of an emergency contact point

4.3.4 Provide Beneficiaries with a welcome pack of groceries on their arrival

4.3.5 Provide cash/ clothing allowances for each Beneficiary of £200 – this is to ensure they have sufficient funds to live on while their claim for benefits is being processed

4.3.6 Provide advice and assistance with registering for mainstream benefits and services and signposting to other advice and information giving agencies – this support includes:

- Assisting with registration for and collection of Biometric Residence Permits following arrival
- Registering with local schools, English language and literacy classes
- Attending local Job Centre Plus appointments for benefit assessments
- Registering with a local GP
- Advice around and referral to appropriate mental health services and to specialist services for victims of torture as appropriate
- Providing assistance with access to employment
- Put in place a support plan for each family or individual for the 12 month period of their support to facilitate their orientation into their new home/area.
- Put in place arrangements for the provision of English language classes which Beneficiaries should be able to access within one month of arrival. This should be provided following an assessment to determine the appropriate level of provision
- Ensure interpreting services are available

4.4 Following the multi-disciplinary / multi-agency meeting the Partners agreed the following planning assumptions to inform the Programme:

4.4.1 Households to consist of families with a 2 or 3 bedroom need, having a regard to the ages and needs of the family over the five year period. Single person

households cannot currently be accommodated due to the existing high demand for 1 bedroom accommodation.

- 4.4.2 Households to be normally accommodated in the private rented sector with one RSL co-ordinating the management. The location will be dependent on the availability of housing, the proximity to amenities, and school capacity both in primary and secondary schools. Home Office funding is available for the RSL to ensure the accommodation is furnished appropriately i.e. food storage, cooking and washing facilities.
- 4.4.3 Households that have an understanding of and be able to communicate in English will be considered in the first instance.
- 4.4.4 Children will be integrated into mainstream education with appropriate support.
- 4.4.5 Community tension monitoring will be carried out by South Wales Police on a regular basis.
- 4.4.6 A link social worker from both Adults and Children will be assigned to each family.
- 4.4.7 ABMU will ensure that GP surgeries in the preferred areas will be encouraged to participate in the Enhanced Service to deliver a higher specification of medical services outside the normal scope of primary care services.
- 4.4.8 The proposed number of families and individuals to be resettled is:
 - 2016-17 = 2 families
 - 2017-18 = 4 families

The number of families and individuals to be resettled in any subsequent years of the Programme will be subject to a review of the Programme in 2017-18 and dependent on the availability of housing, school capacity and access to GP surgeries.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme will help to deliver the Council's equality duties as it helps to secure accommodation for a group of people with protected characteristics.
- 6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as the Programme applies to a specific protected characteristic. Participation in the Programme, if approved, will have a positive impact on Syrian refugees.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 Year one funding is available from the Overseas Development Aid budget (Home Office) to fund costs of Syrian refugees on a per tariff basis. The year one tariff is

for direct local authority costs and there is also additional support for educational and medical needs. Direct local authority costs cover management of the scheme, housing management costs (rents will be subject to Housing Benefit Claims), support costs and cultural integration including English language provision.

- 7.2 Year two to five funding will be allocated on a tapered tariff basis over four years. This funding includes support for integration such as additional English language training as well as social care. The Home Office funding is flexible to enable the Authority to continue to provide funding for schools and health services in years two to five. However, there is an expectation that the reliance on paid support will be reduced in line with the tapering of the tariff and that existing funding routes will be used to provide funding for schools and health services in years two to five. This approach will be an integral part of any commissioned support services.
- 7.3 In addition, individuals will be able to access welfare benefit payments (subject to the statutory limit) and other public services.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

8.1.1 Approve participation in the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme;

8.1.2 Approve the planning assumptions in section 4.4 for delivery of the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme;

8.1.3 Approve support for the families as outlined within the report in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

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Background documents

None