

CABINET

DATE: 12TH JANUARY 2016

ASYLUM SEEKER & REFUGEE DISPERSAL

Report of the Director of Local Services and Housing, Kevin Lowry

Cabinet Member: Councillor Allan Hepple – Economic Growth

Purpose of report

To update Members on activity regarding the Government's request that asylum seeker and refugee dispersal be widened to consider areas where dispersal has not currently taking place, which includes Northumberland.

To obtain member agreement that an in-principle agreement be made to support the accommodation of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, including those presenting under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)

To obtain member agreement for the formation of a multi-agency steering group to determine the detailed offer that the Council will make with regard to supporting the scheme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the report and provide comments on the issue of agreeing the position of the Council regarding the level of support for the dispersal of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, including those identified under the SVPRS, and the formation of a multi-agency steering group.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to both the Places and Environment and the Stronger Communities and Families priorities included in the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2013-2017

Key issues

- NCC is part of the North East Migration Partnership. The NE Migration Partnership Manager is coordinating communications and liaising with the Home Office. The Partnership Manager has been asked by the Home Office to:
 - Coordinate communications with local authorities in the NE area and the Home Office.

- Provide an initial steer on authorities volunteering to take part in the scheme and the numbers they are thinking about (subject to further details and appraisal).
 - To provide advice and support to local authorities in this context.
 - Provide feedback on any operational issues that local authorities are encountering in their preparations
- To support the Syrian crisis the Home Office indicated initially that they were seeking to put in place procedures and arrangements that would see them reaching 100 families per week across the country by the end of October 2015.
 - The Home Office are currently looking for in principle offers of assistance to Asylum Seekers and Refugees from all areas including Syria from those willing to help and any numbers each Local Authority can identify.
 - Northumberland County Council is one of three authorities in the region that have not previously been asylum dispersal areas as the Home Office contractor, G4S has chosen not to identify accommodation in the county (rather than NCC refusing to offer support). As there is a lack of existing infrastructure and experience in providing an effective offer, NCC will need to ensure that we can provide effective support to the scheme to resettle refugees.

Background

1. The Home Office have two distinct schemes for Asylum seekers and refugees;
 - a) General dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees – contracted service with G4S to source accommodation and provide limited support. No financial support to Local Authority areas where dispersal takes place.
 - b) The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme – placement arrangements are made directly with the Local Authority who sources accommodation and provides all support. A financial package is available with this scheme (detailed below).
2. On 7th September the Prime Minister announced an expansion of the existing Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during the next 4 years. This is in addition to those resettled under the current Gateway and Mandate programmes, and people who receive protection in the UK under normal asylum procedures.
3. On the 23rd September 2015 the Prime Minister announced that the UK would provide nearly £100 million in additional emergency funding in response to the Syrian migration crisis.
4. The Council is part of the North East Migration Partnership and the Partnership Manager is coordinating the work with the Home Office.
5. The Home Office are currently looking for in principle offers of assistance from those willing to help (or formal offers from those who will assist and mobilise quickly) and any numbers each LA can identify.
6. Northumberland County Council has never declined to accept the dispersal of asylum seekers or refugees, rather G4S have not sought to source accommodation

in the county. Northumberland therefore is one of three authorities in the region that have not previously been asylum dispersal areas. As there is a lack of existing infrastructure and experience in providing an effective offer, NCC will need to ensure that we can provide effective support to the scheme to resettle refugees. We are therefore currently considering;

- What would be our capacity as a stock holding authority in terms of accommodation
 - What support could be offered to those we take and how would this be managed.
 - How suitable support services and infrastructure can be developed
7. The majority of asylum seekers and refugees are from Syria, Eritrea, Sudan and Iran. Under the SVPRS people will be taken from Syria or most like camps in neighbouring countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees selects and screens vulnerable Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt to be relocated to the UK.
8. Under the SVPRS people will arrive with refugee status for 5 years, which it is envisaged will be renewed. **The costs for support will be met through Central Government for Year One.** The Home Office would be looking to resettle approximately 400 per month across the Country. Approximate costs from Central Government for Year One are as follows:

Unit Cost for Syria VPR Scheme v2.0					
	Adult Benefit Claimant	Other Adults	Children 5-18	Children 3-4	Children u3
Local Authority Costs	£8,520	£8,520	£8,520	£8,520	£8,520
Education	0	0	£4,500	£2,250	0
Special Educational Needs	0	0	£1,000	£1,000	0
DWP Benefits	£12,700	0	0	0	0
Primary Medical Care	£200	£200	£200	£200	£200
Secondary Medical Care	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Totals	£23,420	£10,720	£16,220	£13,970	£10,720

- Local Authority costs include social care costs at £520 per head. These funds are paid directly to the Local Authority upon application.
 - Education costs are paid to the Department for Education directly.
 - Funds for Special Educational Needs (support for language learning or other educational requirements) would be paid directly to the Local Authority.
 - The Home Office will pay DWP costs directly to them.
 - Medical Care costs would be paid directly to the Department of Health.
9. Reception and ground travel costs to the receiving area, void costs for securing accommodation (as well as adaptation & furnishings) and cash & clothing allowances are expected to be funded for the £8,520 Local Authority award.
10. **Under the SVPRS** Local Authorities need to provide the following;
- Arrangements to meet new arrivals at the airport
 - Housing and basic furnishings
 - 12 months wrap around support
 - Appropriate health care including registering with a GP and addressing other health needs
 - ESOL and cultural orientation
 - Psychological support
 - Support to ensure that welfare benefits are in place
11. **Under the SVPRS** the Home Office have confirmed the following additional information regarding payments;
- On the arrival airport – if the families do not come into Newcastle as a result of the charter flight arrangements then the Home Office will pay any associated extra costs.
 - Accommodation - the Home Office will cover reasonable Local Authority accommodation void costs but only where these occur as a result of events beyond the LA control (reasonable has not been defined).
 - Social Care costs – there is an element for social care included in the unit cost to be paid to local authorities – i.e. £520 per head. If an area takes 20 people that means they get £10,400 to fund social care. The Home Office would consider a claim for additional costs once that has all been exhausted so if there is one person who costs £10,000 and 19 who cost nothing they would not expect a claim. However if their costs are over this they will pay top up where evidence is provided. The Home Office's principle is that first year costs are covered. The same applies for medical costs (i.e. £2000 per head topped up as and when necessary) but those costs will not be paid to the local authority.
 - Emerging issues post arrival –if additional costs emerge post-arrival and funding is exhausted then the Home Office would be willing to meet reasonable additional costs but the unit cost must be exhausted for all cases before they will provide this.
 - Education Costs – funding for 0-2 years has not been included as the Home Office do not have a consistent overall picture and funding will not be

provided for a need which doesn't exist however where a genuine cost of providing education for two year olds is identified then they will meet it.

The unit costs of £4,500 for 5-18yr olds and £2,250 for 3-4yrs olds are the amounts currently charged to the Home Office for existing resettlement programmes. Under those programmes, the Home Office will top up funding as necessary and they will do the same for the Syrian VPR programme however they would need to understand why the costs are higher.

- Special Educational Needs costs – the Home Office will provide funding at the rate of £1,000 per child in the 3-18yr old age groups. The same principle applies to this funding as to areas i.e. funding should be pooled and if legitimate costs exceed that pool then the Home Office will cover them.

12. The intention is that the Local Authority will submit claims for payment regularly with supporting evidence which the Home Office will use to verify validity i.e. after arrival. The payment will be up front and if an applicant moved to another authority during the first 12 months there would need to be agreement between the authorities involved to transfer the funding.

13. Funding for Year 2 onwards will not be paid by the Home Office however DCLG is in the process of agreeing rates.

14. To ensure dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees under both schemes is provided effectively in Northumberland key areas that NCC will need to consider are;

- how affordable housing will be accessed
- where existing multi-cultural facilities exist across the County and how existing communities can provide support
- who will provide support for the families during the first 12 months
- how will language barriers be overcome
- who will provide ESOL and cultural orientation support
- the need to identify a Health Care provider with an understanding of the physical and psychological health needs of refugees
- the availability of schools places and support for children whose first language is not English
- How monitoring and auditing will be completed to ensure detailed returns are available for the Home Office to draw down payments.

15. To ensure the scheme is successful NCC will need to:

- Manage expectations of the families, communities and wider partners and stakeholders
- Focus on the integration of families into schools and communities
- Have the right partners in place to ensure that the process is proactively and positively supported and managed
- Ensure that the Northumberland scheme is well planned and that communication is effective.
- Ensure that front line staff working with the families are experienced, trained, flexible and dedicated
- Plan well in advance for Home Office audits

16. The creation of a multi agency steering group to consider all factors, determine how the schemes can be delivered and supported in Northumberland and provide recommendations to Cabinet, will ensure that the scheme development is co-ordinated and effectively managed.

Background papers



Home Office Briefing
SVPRS

Implications

Policy	There are no direct implications to policies within the Council. The support for the SVPRS will in fact support the delivery of objectives and priorities within the Corporate Plan and the Housing Strategy 2013-2018
Finance and value for money	There will be costs associated with meeting the requirement of the SVPRS; the Home Office will met some (though possibly not all) of year 1 costs; year 2 costs are still to be agreed therefore there is an implication to the Council's budget.
Legal	The families will have legal status therefore there are no legal implications.
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	Accommodation for families will be identified from Council-owned residential general needs accommodation.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Equality has been considered and no issues have been determined
Risk Assessment	A risk assessment for both the families arriving and the communities in which they will be placed will be completed as part of the NCC Scheme development

Crime & Disorder	Northumbria Police and Public protection will be involved in the development of the scheme to enable consideration to be given to any implications regarding Crime & Disorder.
Customer Consideration	A Communication Plan will be developed to ensure that customers remain informed.
Carbon reduction	None
Wards	All

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that relevant officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	initials
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Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
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