

## PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

28 April 2016

### REFUGEE RELOCATION SCHEME – PROVISION OF SUPPORT FOR FUTURE REFUGEE FAMILIES

Report of the Director for Places (Development & Economy)

Strategic Aim:	Creating a safer community for all Creating an active and enriched community Building our Infrastructure Meeting the health and wellbeing needs of the community Creating a brighter future for all	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member Responsible:	Mr T C King, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance	
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Ward Councillors	All	

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel

1. Considers the proposed approach by the Council to the refugee location scheme set out in this report and that any recommendations and comments be reported to Cabinet as appropriate.

#### 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the refugee relocation programme following the Prime Ministerial Statement of 7 September 2015 and the statement made by the Late Leader at Council on 9 November 2015 (Minute 336) which “confirmed that Rutland would be working together with Leicester City, Leicestershire and other Councils in the East Midlands to address this.” This report outlines the Council’s proposed actions and those of its partners, subject to the consideration of report no. 75/2016 by Cabinet on 19 April 2016.
- 1.2 A version of this report was considered by Cabinet on 19 April 2016 (report no. 75/2016). The recommendations have not been restated in this Panel report, as Members will have received the Cabinet report under separate cover and the draft Minutes should be published prior to the meeting of this Panel. The recommendations to Cabinet allow for the Panel to be consulted prior to

arrangements being put in place.

- 1.3 This RCC report focuses on the refugee relocation scheme, rather than the other schemes the Government runs. The latter include asylum-seeker dispersal (where fewer integration services are funded and where applicants do not qualify for traditional benefits) and initiatives solely for unaccompanied children. Accepting asylum-seeker dispersal is not recommended for Rutland as the Council would be unable to provide a satisfactory service due to the very limited funding from the Government, the pressure on the housing market and the relative lack of facilities locally. The Government has powers to require councils to receive asylum-seekers, but is not likely to use these in the case of Rutland largely for these reasons.

## **2 THE REFUGEE RELOCATION SCHEME**

- 2.1 The Home Office Document “Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme: Guidance for local authorities and partners” (28 October 2015, attached at Appendix B) states: “The people coming to the UK under the Syrian VPR scheme are in desperate need of assistance and many have significant needs. It prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others.” The programme will cover 20,000 people over the next four to five years.
- 2.2 Regionally, the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership has been asked to coordinate local authority responses and to provide a point of contact for Officers and Members. Discussions between groups of local authorities have taken place, including all councils in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR). The publication of the exact numbers of refugees involved is dependent upon the democratic procedures and timing of each council that confirms participation. It is envisaged that participating councils within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland will make a provisional collective offer to the Home Office by April 2016, subject to the democratic process. At present the refugee relocation scheme remains voluntary and the Council could decide not to accept the relocation of any Syrian Refugees, however this decision could potentially be overruled by the Home Office.
- 2.3 Within the proposed LLR partnership, housing authorities are concentrating on the housing aspects and social services authorities are concentrating on the support aspects. Rutland would have to ensure that both aspects were addressed, but the procurement of support could be shared across LLR for economies of scale and to capitalise on existing expertise. The arrangements are expected to build on the Local Resilience Forum. A protocol would be required and the process mapped out. LLR are requesting that Rutland accept 12 individuals over a period for four to five years.
- 2.4 The Government’s own briefing paper on the original version of the scheme suggested that there would be an average of five members per household. For the updated scheme announced in September, the Prime Minister said that the emphasis would be particularly on vulnerable children, including orphans. Whilst this might mean that the average family size would be less than before, unaccompanied children would generally be in placements so the Council has still assumed that one dwelling would be required for every five people.

- 2.5 Before a refugee can enter the UK under the scheme, security screening is carried out and medical needs fully assessed. Currently, the preferred local authority for the placement is selected centrally by the Home Office, but the Government is moving towards this taking place through a regional facilitation model (single point of contact). Full details are sent to the local authority to assess accommodation and care needs (including whether these can be met locally). The local authority then provides the Home Office with details of the estimated costs. Three month visas to enter the UK are arranged overseas, with arrangements made on arrival for Biometric Residence Permits to be issued with five years' humanitarian protection.
- 2.6 The proposed timeline is given below. Further information is given under 'Financial Implications' and 'Organisational Implications' below.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Cabinet (key decision)	19 April 2016	Director of Places (Development & Economy)
Consideration by People (Children) Scrutiny Panel	28 April 2016	Director of Places (Development & Economy)
Complete mapping exercise of services/support that can be provided across Rutland and will not be commissioned centrally	30 April 2016	Director of Places (Development & Economy)
Liaise with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health	30 April 2016	Director of People
Arrange a meeting with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for Stamford to explain the Resettlement Programme and request a named officer to assist with the implementation	30 April 2016	Revenues & Benefits Manager
Assess the likely need for Council Tax support and Discretionary Housing Payments and support to claim	30 April 2016	Revenues & Benefits Manager
Assess timescale for delivery of accommodation and make arrangements	30 April 2016	Planning Policy & Housing Manager
Establish arrangements for pooling of Resources	30 April 2016	Director of Places (Development & Economy)

### **3 HOUSING IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The refugees would be eligible to apply as homeless and to apply for social housing through the housing register. It is suggested that in most cases a homelessness application could be completed and is likely to result in the Council being required to arrange accommodation. This could be temporary accommodation (possibly in a low demand flat or existing temporary accommodation), with the likelihood of the household receiving a permanent offer

through the housing register in due course. The legislation makes it difficult for the Council to nominate a household to a housing association without this being through the homelessness duty or as a nomination through the housing register.

- 3.2 Due to the need to access services and the Government's requirements regarding accommodation, if housing were required this would need to be provided in Oakham and be furnished (including linen).
- 3.3 Members may be aware of a 'spare room' movement nationally, but the LGA is advising against this as unsustainable and impracticable. Also, Refugee Council guidance suggests that in general volunteers should be trained to National Occupational Standards. Many refugees are also likely to have levels of welfare needs which may be quite significant.
- 3.4 The Council has started informal discussions with housing associations regarding the possible use of empty properties, such as through routine vacancies or properties that are in low demand, or habitable but awaiting redevelopment. Two-bedroomed or three-bedroomed flats in Oakham are a possible solution as these provide a good standard of accommodation but can be in relatively low demand. The use of the two existing Council-owned properties is also a possibility. These are considered the most practicable solutions, unless a sympathetic owner of a suitable 'spare house' is willing to rent or lease it out at an appropriate level. Further information on options is given in Appendix A.

#### **4 SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 It is envisaged that Rutland would receive around 12 individuals under the scheme. Some are likely to be arriving within families and others may require social care placements rather than family housing.
- 4.2 The Council's social care responsibilities are essentially the same for refugees as for any other Rutland resident, although the nature of support needed may vary.
- 4.3 If the refugee's family includes children there may be support needs for interpreters, accessing schools, additional support in the classroom and assistance as a child in need (this may necessitate provision of children's centre services, counselling, social work intervention and support, provision of practical support in terms of money, budgeting, employment, benefits and furnishing a property etc.). The potential cost would be dependent on the needs and the degree of trauma a child has experienced. It could be much higher if a residential placement were needed or lower if there is a straightforward low level of need. If a child is unaccompanied (orphans are a priority group in the Prime Ministerial Statement), the LGA suggest that the typical annual cost may be £50,000 per child per year. This could occur if a child is accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or if Court proceedings are issued for Care Orders.
- 4.4 The general issue around children is the Council's size and the lack of capacity to provide a social work service for traumatised children. Furthermore, in terms of placements, the Council has no residential care facilities and 60% of its own Looked After Children are placed outside of Rutland. The Council struggles at the moment to offer a Rutland foster carer for Rutland children, and so any additional demands particularly unaccompanied children would put huge pressure on the

Council's already overstretched and limited placement capacity.

- 4.5 Where an area like Rutland is new to resettlement, the Government's guidance document states: "Local authorities will need to think carefully about whether they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care and resettlement of people in need of our help." There are a range of immigration advice services in Leicester and Rutland Citizens Advice can also advise on immigration issues. Refugee Action closed its local office in Leicester recently. There are a number of less formal services in Leicester providing practical and/or drop-in support and an NHS practice providing more specialist services that refugees may need, but these are less accessible for Rutland residents and might not be funded for them. The possible joint procurement of services would help to resolve this issue.

## 5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are three key questions which arise:

- what is the marginal cost to the Council for every person we accept?
- what funding is available to the Council?
- will this funding cover the costs?

### **What is the marginal cost to Council for every person we accept?**

- 5.2 There is not enough information to assess full financial implications from the level of detail currently available. This will clearly depend largely on the details of the Government scheme and the numbers and specific needs of families with children. Some possible examples are given below.
- 5.3 Depending on family circumstances, costs may be incurred in a number of areas:
- 5.4 **Housing and Housing Benefit** (see Appendix 1): the cost of housing a family in an existing affordable home could be between £5,200 and £6,240 per year in rent before Housing Benefit is taken into account, plus an average of £500 per year in furnishings, utensils, bed linen etc. Over time, the refugees should require less assistance and some may be able to find work.
- 5.5 **Education:** The cost of education is not usually met by the Council because Rutland's state schools are funded by Government grants; either directly in the case of Academies, or via local authorities in the case of Maintained schools. It is possible that the Council may be requested by schools to pass on the funding allowance for the education of refugees which will be received by the LLR partnership from the Government. This is £4,500 per child aged 5-18 and £2,250 per child aged 3-4. The schools' existing funding formula allows up to £6,000 per child per year for pupils with English as a second language and other special needs, but the Council funds more substantial special needs costs in excess of this. Based on the Government funding formula for refugees and the likely range of special needs, an additional average initial cost to the Council of £1,000 per child per year may be envisaged but clearly the needs of children will vary considerably.
- 5.6 **Social Care - (see paras. 4.3 and 4.4): this will vary dependent on the needs of the individual.** If a child is unaccompanied (orphans are a priority group in the

Prime Ministerial Statement), the LGA suggest that the typical annual cost may be £50,000 per child per year. At the lower end of need, a visit to a family from a housing support worker or equivalent may cost around £40 depending on the length of the visit, which could be around £2,000 per year if the visits were weekly on average. These costs would increase if an interpreter were needed. Housing-related support is intended to promote independence and the experience of other councils is that the need for this type of support is likely to reduce over time.

5.7 **Other costs:** There may be other costs to the Council such as interpretation services both for adults and for children in schools if the individuals do not speak English and for translation of documents and bills etc. Experience from Leicester suggests that the level of English known by the refugees is likely to be very limited. Costs may vary but the use of an interpreter could be as high as £100 per hour, with additional time and expenses for travelling. Normally routine issues can be very time-consuming initially. An example might be a support worker and interpreter having to travel from an East Midlands city to take a Syrian family in Oakham to a Jobcentre Plus interview in Stamford. Rural travel costs for refugees and staff could also be an issue generally and it is not yet clear whether this type of additional rural cost will be shared between the councils. A co-ordinator could need to be employed across the Leicestershire District Councils and Rutland, which would need to be funded up-front as the Government funding is not received in advance. There is also likely to be other *ad hoc* access to Council services.

5.8 In brief, the marginal costs will vary from family to family and are difficult to predict.

#### **What funding is available to the Council?**

5.9 In meeting these costs, there is various funding available.

5.10 **Housing and Housing Benefit:** The Council is able to recoup the cost of mainstream Housing Benefit from the Government, but this will not cover furnishing, payments to housing associations for when the property is empty awaiting a tenant, nor for additional payments if these are needed to address the bedroom tax. This would mean that the Council may recoup about £4,000 per year through Housing Benefit per family. If Housing Benefit is insufficient for the costs of some accommodation, the Government funding allocations for refugees could, in principle, be used to top this up, but the arrangements for this would need to be agreed with the LLR councils. Currently, LLR are proposing an alternative whereby any rents above Local Housing Allowance would have to be topped up by the Council, possibly through Discretionary Housing Payments, which is a very limited budget and (if alternative arrangements are not made) will have an impact on Rutland residents (some of whom may be vulnerable). The recommended options of using existing temporary accommodation or social housing that is not in high demand will help to minimise this risk, although additional contributions from the Council may still be needed for any properties affected by the bedroom tax.

5.11 **Education, social care and other costs:** The Government funding for local authorities for the first year a refugee is in the UK is below. The first year's funding is met from the Overseas Aid budget.

Adults	£8,520
Children 5-18	£14,020 (includes £4,500 for education and £1,000 for SEN)
Children 3-4	£11,770 (includes £2,250 for education and £1,000 for SEN)
Children under 3	£8,520

5.12 The above figures do not include the Housing Benefit and other Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits which individuals will receive, or the medical care costs of £2,600 per person which will be paid direct to the CCGs.

5.13 The funding for subsequent years is as follows:

Year 2	£5,000 per person
Year 3	£3,700 per person
Year 4	£2,300 per person
Year 5	£1,000 per person

5.14 The Government is working with local government associations to consider issues such as:

- arrangements for high cost cases
- support for unaccompanied children, where relevant
- movement between local authorities post arrival
- housing costs and processes.

5.15 Under the current normal funding formula for Education, the Council also has resources under the High Needs Block for special education need costs that are in excess of £6,000 per pupil per year, but this fund is potentially capped and may not be available to the Council if possible changes to the formula go ahead.

#### **Will this funding cover the costs?**

5.16 It is likely that the Government funding for refugees will be paid into a shared LLR pot. If services for refugees were to be commissioned across LLR and paid for out of the pot, there would need to be clear arrangements about how over-spend and under-spend from the pot is split between the councils. For instance, would pooling be done on the basis of the number of refugees in each area or the population of each area? This would become an increasing issue as the years progress and some funding is scaled down. The arrangements for reimbursement of placements for any unaccompanied children would need to be clarified as these are likely to be procured directly by the individual social services authorities.

5.17 There is not enough information to assess full financial implications from the level of detail currently available, although these will clearly depend largely on the details of the Government scheme and the numbers and specific needs of families with children. Examples of possible numbers and levels of need are outlined in the report above. It is likely that the funding available will not cover all of the costs.

#### **Further implications for Revenues/Benefits**

5.18 This is a complex area as persons from abroad generally have no right to access public funds, however refugees have a different status but still need to satisfy

certain conditions, the main one being a 'right to reside' in the UK. There is nonetheless a potential risk that there might be a short delay confirming a refugee's status. As benefits do not come through straight away in any case, some other modest payments to refugees may be made on a short term basis using the Government funding for the refugees.

- 5.19 In RCC's case the Syrian refugees will have recourse to access state benefits i.e. Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Housing Benefit, Local Council Tax Support and discretionary funds and financial crisis support to help them to set up their home and buy food, gas and electricity until their state benefits come thorough, providing they have crossed to the UK legally (they should have a five year visa to evidence their right to reside status- there is no right to access public funds for people who do not have a legal status to reside in the UK- however this becomes complex as they can apply for asylum once here). Some of the support listed above is funded by the Council, the DWP or other bodies.
- 5.20 It is worth noting that the DWP as part of welfare reforms has tightened up access to benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance for Persons from Abroad (PFAs), and this is incorporated within the conditionality rules i.e. must learn to speak the English language and pass an associated test. Failure to pass tests will mean that their entitlement is sanctioned. This has happened already to some PFAs.
- 5.21 It is likely that immediate financial crisis support will be needed as the DWP may take some time in processing their primary benefits as PFA claims are complex to administer and slow to award.
- 5.22 Households on benefits generally pay only 25% towards Council Tax in Rutland, which could lead to a potential reduction in Council Tax yield. However, this could also be the case if social housing were occupied by local people.

## **6 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Local authorities' participation in the national VPR scheme is voluntary and there is Government guidance which needs to be considered. For those that participate, there is a need to ensure a range of services for resettled refugees, including accommodation, assistance in accessing welfare benefits, education and other integration services. Local authorities may make use of accommodation in the private rented sector.
- 6.2 Resettled refugees are allowed to move away from the area where they are resettled but will not be eligible for resettlement support in the new area.
- 6.3 Should RCC resolve to participate in the scheme, it would be advisable to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with participating councils around the roles and responsibilities of different partners.
- 6.4 If RCC commits to assisting in the resettlement of child refugees, there will need to be compliance with all relevant education legislation and the Children Act 1989 at least. It is likely that there will need to be the issue of Court proceedings in the case of orphans and children without families, with the associated cost relating to those proceedings.

- 6.5 In the light of possible immigration issues, subject to any guidance from the Government, there may be a need for specialist immigration advice in some cases, but at this stage it is difficult to quantify.

## **7 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening Template has been completed which has found that the proposal would help to meet the needs of vulnerable people with protected characteristics.

## **8 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Advice will be given to the refugees about living in Britain and the properties used will be checked to make sure they are safe to live in. Security screening is carried out before an individual can enter the UK.

## **9 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The refugees will have been assessed as vulnerable and have agreed to relocation to the UK under the scheme. An estimated 20% of refugees will have significant medical needs, although the majority of these people will not require adaptations for people with disabilities. The improved conditions are likely to improve their health and wellbeing, or at least to help prevent deterioration.
- 9.2 The Council will be informed of the needs of households before arrival. Nonetheless, many of the refugees will be traumatised and may take some time to adjust to life in the UK. Experience from other areas has shown that, whilst normally reliable, sometimes needs may only become apparent on the person's arrival. Medical care costs of £2,600 per person will be paid from the Government direct to the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

## **10 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The rehousing of a limited number of vulnerable refugees is a national priority and Rutland has been asked to play its part within a wider LLR partnership. Provided there is a fair sharing of financial risk between the partners, it is proposed that Rutland participates along the lines proposed in this report.

## **11 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 There are no additional background papers to the report.

## **12 APPENDICES**

- 12.1 Appendix A - Temporary Accommodation Option Appraisal
- 12.2 Appendix B – Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme: Guidance for local authorities and partners

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577. (18pt)

## Appendix A. Temporary Accommodation Option Appraisal

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Potential suitability as option</b>
Short term accommodation currently owned by the Council	A very small number of small residential properties are currently owned by the Council with the potential for use as temporary accommodation.	<p>May require a change to the planning consent, or physical changes to the buildings (particularly if needed for people with physical disabilities). Some accommodation could potentially be made available at short notice.</p> <p>Accommodation could otherwise be used to meet short term local housing needs, for which alternative provision may need to be made.</p>	Some furniture may be available, but further expenditure to equip the property may be required. Section 106 funding held by the Council could be used for conversion works if needed.	Medium - High
Use of a low demand registered social landlord property	<p>Multiple family flats in Oakham have often been available from time to time and often require multiple offers. The Council could seek to agree with regional partners that Rutland is not 'on line' until a property is ready.</p> <p>Could agree with Spire or another housing association to make these available.</p>	<p>Not suitable for people with disabilities (unless on the ground floor).</p> <p>There has recently been a reduction in these properties becoming vacant, but this may be a temporary 'blip'.</p>	<p>Conversion costs would not be required, but would still require furniture, linen, kitchen equipment etc. Decoration may be needed.</p> <p>The Council may be required to pay rent for the time the property is empty.</p>	High

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Potential suitability as option</b>
<p>Refurbishment of an empty property, or use of an existing private rented property in good condition.</p>	<p>At February 2016, there were 183 properties that had been empty for six months or more. Some of these were new build dwellings or housing association properties at Beckworth Court that are proposed for demolition.</p> <p>There is potential for private sector properties to be purchased or leased.</p>	<p>Many of the properties are of types unsuited for affordable housing and many would require works of about £10,000 to be carried out. Many are not in Oakham, where the housing for refugees would be required. A range of options to bring empty properties back into use are being examined, but these are linked potentially to enforcement activity and the delivery timetable is very uncertain. It is suggested that addressing empty properties is a separate issue, with who could be housed in them being an issue for slightly later consideration. Purchase of properties specifically for refugees could cause community relations issues.</p>	<p>Likely £10,000 towards works, plus purchase costs of perhaps £150,000 to £250,000 depending on the property. (A housing association could provide a new dwelling for approximately half of that amount in capital subsidy by borrowing the remainder and having criteria about suitable new build properties.)</p> <p>As an example, leasing or supporting a private tenancy in a property could in effect involve paying the difference between the market rent of a three-bedroomed property (perhaps £650 per month) and the £550 per month maximum that would be met through the local housing allowance, plus additional expenditure towards repairs, equipping the home and guarantees to the owner.</p>	<p>Low - Medium</p>

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Potential suitability as option</b>
Use of Nottingham County Council's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Supported Living	Rutland can use this to purchase supported living (accommodation and everyday tenancy management) for vulnerable people from this agreement. Some of the providers (typically housing associations) have experience of operating in Rutland and are reputable. Process likely to be more straightforward than starting procurement from scratch.	Procurement rules for use of DPS would need to be followed and terms agreed. Provider would have to obtain suitable properties in Rutland and there would be some delay before properties could be on stream.	Further research into likely costs through the DPS would need to be carried out. Costs likely to exceed Housing Benefit levels and do not include support.	Low - Medium
Purchase of a new property for use as long term affordable housing	This could provide additional good quality affordable housing on a development.	It could be challenging to negotiate a good price with a developer. The purchase of a brand new property for this use could cause community relations difficulties which may be in no one's interests. Alternative existing properties are available for use and refugees could still get a chance of a new property though the housing register.	The purchase of a property could be for between around £70,000 to £180,000 depending on the terms.	Low



Home Office

# Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme

Guidance for local authorities and partners

28 October 2015

## General background

### How many additional people will you resettle?

- The UK is at the forefront of the response to the crisis in Syria. We want to help refugees in the region as far as we possibly can, but recognise that for some vulnerable people the only solution is to bring them to countries like the UK.
- The Government is therefore expanding the existing Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Scheme and intends to resettle up to 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament.

### How will the arrival of 20,000 be spread out?

- Our prime concern is the safety and protection of these very vulnerable people as they arrive in this country.
- The expansion of the scheme needs careful and meticulous planning to ensure we get it right. We are looking to harness the strong offers of support and assistance we have received to resettle people who are in desperate need of our help.
- We are working closely with all local government associations and a number of NGOs and partner organisations, and will continue to do so, to enable local authorities to plan ahead.

### How else is the Government supporting Syrians in need of protection?

- Our priority is to continue to provide humanitarian aid to those most in need in the region, while actively seeking an end to the crisis. We believe this approach is the best way to ensure that the UK's help has the greatest impact for the majority of refugees who remain in the region and their host countries.
- The UK has been at the forefront of the international response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. We are providing more than £1.12 billion in humanitarian aid - more than any other country in the world except the United States.
- The UK is the only major country in the world that has kept its promise of spending 0.7% of our national income on aid and we should be proud of this. By the end of March 2015, UK support had delivered over 20 million food rations, each of which feeds one person for one month, provided access to clean water for 1.6 million people (peak month), and over 2.4 million medical consultations in Syria and the region.
- We have also taken in more than 5,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Syria since 2011.

## The expanded scheme

### How will the expansion of the programme operate?

- We have significant experience of resettling vulnerable people and our existing domestic resettlement mechanisms provide a basis for expanding the scheme. We are working with partners in the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and local authorities to ensure that we can begin to increase numbers as quickly as possible.
- We are expanding the scheme in two phases. Phase one has the task of immediately scaling up the existing resettlement programme and phase two will work towards transforming our resettlement and protection offer including developing ideas for community sponsorship as per the Home Secretary's commitment.

- Over the coming weeks and months, we will work with local authorities, the UNHCR and others to put in place the structures to ensure we can scale up the current arrangements so that we can meet the aim of bringing up to 20,000 Syrians over the course of this Parliament.

## How long will the expansion take?

- Although we have simplified the process as much as we can, the UNHCR must still assess each individual case before referring them to the Home Office. The Home Office must conduct visa checks and at the same time a place must be found in a local authority.
- We do all of this already, but it is important we get it right and scaling up a system like this in a way that protects the interests of all concerned, including local communities, will take time.

## How do you choose who comes to the UK?

- The people coming to the UK under the Syrian VPR scheme are in desperate need of assistance and many have significant needs. It prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others.
- We work closely with the UNHCR to identify cases that they deem in need of resettlement and we will continue this work to ensure we deliver our commitment to provided refuge to 20,000 Syrians over the course of this Parliament.

## Questions

### How does the current Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme work?

- The UK sets the criteria and then UNHCR identifies and submits potential cases for our consideration. Cases are screened and considered by us and we retain the right to reject on security, war crimes or other grounds.
- Once the screening process has been completed a full medical assessment is conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the host country. Full details of the case and medical history are sent to the local authority for assessment of need, including whether suitable accommodation and care are available locally. The local authority then provides details of the estimated costs.
- Eligibility is then confirmed and IOM start the visa application process. UK Visas and Immigration International issue UK visas (3 months Leave Outside of the Rules) and on arrival, arrangements are made for Biometric Residence Permits to be issued with 5 years' humanitarian protection.

### Is this voluntary for local authorities?

Yes, this a national and voluntary scheme.

### What funding arrangements are in place?

- The first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs, excluding economic integration are fully funded by central government using the overseas aid budget, in accordance with international guidelines and practice. To ensure that local authorities can plan ahead and continue to respond to the overwhelmingly generous response of the British people, we will also provide additional funding to assist with costs incurred in future years.
- These arrangements will be applied to all cases since the 20,000 expansion was announced. We understand that local authorities need certainty about the financing of the

scheme in order to enter into contracts and commit resources. We will be working closely with local government to develop the process for drawing down the funding in order that this certainty can be given, including to those councils offering help under the existing scheme

- We are working with Treasury and local government associations to consider issues such as:
  - Arrangements for high cost cases
  - Regional and devolved administration issues
  - Support for unaccompanied children, where relevant
  - Movement between local authorities post arrival
  - Housing costs and processes

### **What if an area is new to resettlement?**

- Local authorities will need to think carefully about whether they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care and resettlement of people in need of our help. It would be worth speaking to existing resettlement areas to learn best practice. Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships can put you in touch.

### **How can local authorities find out more about the profiles and needs of the refugees they will be hosting?**

- The UNHCR identifies suitable cases that meet criteria and then refer them to the Home Office. As soon as a local authority wants to participate, we will send these referrals that give detailed information on the individual cases.

### **Will the 20,000 be on top of existing schemes?**

- The Government will expand the existing Syrian VPR Scheme and we expect to resettle up to 20,000 vulnerable Syrians during this Parliament. This is in addition to those we resettle under Gateway and Mandate and the thousands who receive protection in the UK under normal asylum procedures.

### **How will you ensure refugees are allocated fairly and in a way that manages the impacts on local communities and services?**

- Our existing asylum dispersal policy is aimed at ensuring an equitable distribution of refugees across the country so that no individual local authority bears a disproportionate share of the burden.
- That is why we will be talking to local authorities and other partners over the coming weeks to ensure that resettlement capacity can be identified and the impact on those taking new allocations can be managed in a fair and controlled way.

### **How can the public help now?**

- For further information refer to the Government release on the GOV.UK website <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2>  
Or call The British Red Cross Crisis Helpline on 0800 107 8727 that triages calls to appropriate organisations.

## **Key facts and statistics on resettlement**

- Home Office quarterly immigration statistics, including asylum and refugee figures - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>
- Information on claiming asylum in the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/claim-asylum>
- Information for organisations working with vulnerable refugees about the Gateway Protection Programme for resettlement in the UK -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gateway-protection-programme-information-for-organisations>

**Information on aid to Syria** DFID fact sheet on UK aid to Syria

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>

## Further information

More detailed information is being prepared by the Department for Communities and Local Government and will be sent to local authorities who are interested in being part of the scheme.