
Report To:	Health and Social Care Committee	Date:	22 October 2020
Report By:	Louise Long Corporate Director (Chief Officer) Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)	Report No:	SW/41/2020/SMcA
Contact Officer:	Sharon McAlees	Contact No:	01475 715282
Subject:	MIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT ISSUES		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Health and Social Care Committee on the Council's involvement in current Government refugee schemes and support to other migrants and to seek approval in principle to recommence refugee resettlement in Inverclyde via participating in the Government's new arrangements for accommodating and supporting refugees which were announced, by the then Home Secretary, in June 2019.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has been participating in three refugee schemes run by the UK government through the Home Office. The refugee schemes are the Afghan Relocation Scheme, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Scheme.
- 2.2 In addition, other migrants arriving in the area, including European Economic Area nationals, are given appropriate advice, guidance and assistance to facilitate their settlement and integration in Inverclyde.
- 2.3 The Home Secretary made an announcement on 17 June 2019 to confirm the Government's ongoing commitment to resettlement, announcing plans for a new UK Resettlement Scheme which will see thousands more refugees provided with a route to protection when it was anticipated to begin in 2020. The new scheme has been delayed by the ongoing pandemic crisis and discussions are underway for its recovery plan.
- 2.4 The UK Resettlement Scheme will consolidate the existing Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) and Gateway Protection Programme which will all naturally come to an end in 2020. This new scheme will be open to refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to be in need of resettlement to the UK because of their vulnerability and does not have a specific geographical focus. The European Union Settlement Scheme is also likely to impact on Council Services, depending on the outcome of Brexit negotiations.
- 2.5 The Home Office is also keen for local authorities in Scotland to participate in widening asylum seeker dispersal and to become involved in the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Consideration is being given to mandate councils in Scotland to participate in respect of this if voluntary agreement is not reached.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Health and Social Care Committee is asked to:-

- 3.1 Note the existing work of the Council in successfully integrating migrants in Inverclyde;

- 3.2 Approve in principle recommencement of the resettlement of families under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and subject to detail on financial implications to committee
- 3.3 Agree that Inverclyde will participate in the new UK Resettlement Scheme and assist EEA nationals who require assistance under the European Union Settlement Scheme; and
- 3.4 Approve the strategic direction for the New Scots Service as outlined in this report.

Louise Long
Corporate Director (Chief Officer)
Inverclyde HSCP

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Inverclyde has been participating in three Government Resettlement Programmes, the Afghan Relocation Scheme, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement. The first Afghan families arrived in March 2015 and the first Syrian families arrived in November 2015. A further family, under the Vulnerable Children's Scheme, arrived in December 2017. When introducing these schemes, the UK Government asked local authorities to take the lead in accommodating and supporting individuals and families arriving in the UK. The decision on how to accommodate and support was left to individual councils, some, although none in Scotland, sub-contracted all of the arrangements out to community and third sector organisations.
- 4.2 Currently the Inverclyde HSPC 'New Scots' Refugee Integration Team coordinates all support for refugee families in Inverclyde and this involves a number of commissioned services. The team provides all support required to enable a family to establish their new life in Inverclyde from the point they arrive at Glasgow airport. This includes airport pick up, securing and furnishing tenancies, materials and food for the home on arrival, support to register with medical services, access to bespoke mental health supports, support to apply for benefits, introduction and support to make community links, access to courses to learn language, assistance to commence voluntary work, support to secure employment, managing tenancies, and supporting children into their education are core activities.
- 4.3 All the refugee families are provided with a service from the refugee integration team which fits with the Nurturing Inverclyde vision to 'Get It Right for Every Child, Citizen and Community' and close attention is paid to attending to all aspects of the wellbeing indicators of Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. In addition by ensuring the Health and Social Care Partnership provides a co-ordinated and supportive introduction to the area the team contributes the Inverclyde Alliance Strategic Priorities of stabilising the population, addressing any inequalities for this minority group within the community at the earliest opportunity and enhancing the culture in Inverclyde to contribute to making the community an attractive place to live, work and visit.
- 4.4 To date, a total of 55 families have resettled in Inverclyde. A number of Afghan families (18) have left the area but not for any reasons associated with their experience of living in Inverclyde. The main reasons given were, lack of a mosque (and therefore no Imam for the religious education of their children), little access to affordable halal meat, desire to live closer to a larger Afghan community, a wish to live near friends and/or family and greater employment opportunities. In contrast, no Syrian families have enquired about leaving the area and, in fact, Syrians from other parts of Scotland and the UK, as well as Europe, have come and settled in Inverclyde, partly because of family connections but also because of the quality of support and services. There are currently 35 families and individuals who arrived under the three previously detailed Government Schemes, this is made up of 64 adults and 60 children. The arrival of two new families will take this up to 70 and 65 respectively. In addition, we provide advice, guidance and assistance to two families who have arrived from another Scottish Local Authority and four other individuals.
- 4.5 Staff from the 'New Scots' Refugee Integration Team also provide support to other migrants who arrive in the area. These include former asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status, support only asylum seekers who do not request accommodation and EEA nationals. River Clyde Homes (RCH) have recently reached an agreement with the Scottish Refugee Council, whereby asylum seekers who have been living in Glasgow and been granted refugee status will be referred to RCH and shown properties to see if they would be interested in moving to the area. In response to this the refugee integration team has agreed a process and will maintain communication with RCH to ensure we are aware of and have the resources to support

any individuals moving to the area by applying for the appropriate funding from the Home Office. To date, there have been three cases of this type moving into the area and more can be expected in future.

- 4.6 Refugees who have come to the UK as part of the Syrian Resettlement Team or the Vulnerable Children's Scheme have the same rights as other citizens and can arrive in the area because they have family in Inverclyde and wish to relocate without officially transferring. This would mean that the local authority would receive no additional funding from the Home Office to support these individuals. To date the New Scots team has managed to liaise with the Home Office and the other local authorities to arrange a transfer of funding for every family or individual who has relocated to the area therefore maintaining an oversight and some involvement with all refugee families coming to Inverclyde.
- 4.7 The EU Settlement Scheme may also see EEA nationals approach the Council for advice and, potentially, support, depending on the outcome of Brexit negotiations. In order to support these individuals, and to give advice to families as they approach living in the UK for five years and have to apply to remain in the country, the locality requires access to registered and accredited Immigration Advisors. The citizens advice bureau has been funded to provide this advice across Scotland and Inverclyde share this dedicated resource with East Renfrewshire.
- 4.8 The Home Office is also in discussions with the CoSLA Strategic Migration Partnership about widening the asylum seeker dispersal scheme and asking more local authorities to become involved. Inverclyde has participated in discussions with CoSLA and the Home Office regarding this, however, things are still at a very early stage and certain conditions would have to be agreed before any further progress was made. The Council has also been asked to participate in the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children but is not in a position to do so at present. Again, certain conditions, including financial considerations, would have to be met before any agreement was reached. Currently councils are being consulted on their ability to participate in these schemes however the emerging crisis in respect of settling these vulnerable groups has raised some suggestion that if voluntary agreement with a sufficient number of councils cannot be reached that areas may be mandated to participate.
- 4.9 The UK Resettlement Scheme, in its first year, will look to resettle categories of refugees broadly similar to those under existing schemes, with the majority coming from the Middle East and North Africa. However, over time the nationalities of refugees settled may change in response to world events and the global context. In the first year of operation of the new scheme, the UK will aim to resettle in the region of 5,000 refugees. Decisions on the number of refugees to be resettled in subsequent years will be determined through future spending rounds. Year on year, resettlement volumes are likely to fluctuate according to the flow of referrals from overseas and the availability of suitable accommodation and support in the UK. Local authority participation in the new scheme will continue to be voluntary at this stage, with refugees allocated in the same way as currently under the existing schemes.
- 4.10 The option of continuing to participate in the scheme going forward could bring significant further benefit to the council by adding Home Office funding to Health, Education and Social Work Service budgets, by developing existing community and third sector resources and by contributing to the Council's agenda to support repopulation and to reduce inequalities to make Inverclyde a better place to live.
- 4.11 The introduction of the new Resettlement Scheme, which is a consolidation of arrangements, would also allow the Council to review the role and size of the Refugee Integration Team contingent on the scale of involvement in the scheme. It also offers the opportunity to look at current posts in place and explore longer term contracts for the team as funding from the Home Office will be available for five years from the date of families' arrival.

- 4.12 There is currently no available information on a preferable staffing ratio for working with the refugee groups and this would be difficult to ascertain as a result of the wide ranging issues presented by the individuals using the scheme. The refugee families have varied levels of vulnerability, physical and mental health considerations and social and educational backgrounds. For comparative purposes, contact was made with Renfrewshire Council to look at the size and structure of its team. Renfrewshire currently supports a total of 43 families, comprising 78 adults and 89 children. It may need to increase once more families resettle however this will be linked to the financial paper.
- 4.13 The New Scots Team operate very effectively as a result of the small size of the authority and the close working relationships the team have established with other agencies, services and community groups in the area.
- 4.14 The Inverclyde Migration Group, which was formed when the Council agreed to accept Afghan Refugees under the Afghan Locally Engaged Staff Relocation Scheme, will continue to meet over the course of the programme and address issues relating to community response and engagement, monitoring demand along with viability in regard to availability of social housing, school places, the impact on health services, to consider resource implications to support the development of the future strategic direction of the service. The Group membership covers all of the Council's key community planning partners as well as organisations from the Third Sector. Social Work, Health, Education, Police, Department of Work and Pensions, Registered Social Landlords are all members of the Group along with participating Third Sector Organisations such as Your Voice, The Trust etc. An annual report detailing the development of the New Scots Service, how its objectives are being met and how it links with other local and national strategic outcomes shall be submitted to the Corporate Management Team, Policy & Resources Committee and Health & Social Care Committee.
- 4.15 Considered planning in respect of stepping down services at the end of the five year period of support is required for each family. A key component of this would be the ability of the Integration Team to access accredited legal advice on immigration matters, along with ensuring that all families will have become fully integrated into the local community over that period. The failure to ensure that families apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK at the end of the five years will leave an intolerable financial burden on the Council. This is because as their leave to remain in the UK expires, people will have no recourse to public funds and will lose entitlement to welfare benefits and social housing and will look to the local authority for financial support and accommodation. Legal opinion is firmly of the view that local authorities will have a duty to provide this. It is, therefore, crucial that staff within the team become registered and accredited advisers with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

As the case studies (background paper 7.1) illustrate, many of these vulnerable families may require support beyond the five year period funded by the Home Office, assuming they have their leave to remain extended or made indefinite.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 5.1 Depending on the number of families which locate in Inverclyde there could be significant implications. Officers will bring a report back to Committee outlining these before a final decision is taken.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

5.2 Legal

There are no new legal duties place on the Council as a result of this report.

5.3 Human Resources

Should the report be approved, a review of required staffing levels will be carried out and a further report on additional staffing requirements be completed. Any costs arising from this will be met by the income derived from the Home Office.

5.4 Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

5.5 Repopulation

The recommendations contained in the report will result in an increase in the local population and become a key component of the Council's ongoing repopulation strategy.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Corporate Management Team agrees with the proposals in this report.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Policy and Resources Committee Paper 14th November 2017 (Item 16)

<https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2010>