
Report To:	Social Work & Social Care Scrutiny Panel	Date:	31 October 2023
Report By:	Kate Rocks Chief Officer Inverclyde HSCP	Report No:	SWSCSP/34/2023/AB
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Subject:	Refugee, Resettlement and Asylum Programmes within Inverclyde		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the various refugee, resettlement and asylum programmes within Inverclyde.
- 1.3 We welcome the migration of refugees and asylum seekers into Inverclyde and recognise the positive social and cultural contribution that they are having in our communities. This report also outlines a number of concerns in relation to the accommodation of asylum seekers in dispersed and contingency accommodation, taken together with the other resettlement schemes and migration, these are placing significant pressure on health and social care services and our capacity to manage competing demands on services.
- 1.4 Work continues with partners to ensure pathways and support for individuals and families are robust and allow those arriving in Inverclyde to feel safe and supported and to integrate into their new community. Detailed service development and financial planning is underway to ensure the appropriate services are able to respond with pressures anticipated and mitigated as far as possible.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Social Work & Social Care Scrutiny Panel are asked:
1. To note the content of this report and the demand on services from the varied UK Home Office asylum seeker work and resettlement programmes.
 2. To note that a detailed service development and financial planning is underway to ensure the appropriate services are able to respond with pressures anticipated and mitigated as far as possible.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 Inverclyde has worked in partnership with the Home Office and other partners over a number of years to successfully deliver a range of resettlement schemes within Inverclyde such as those from Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen. In addition, there is an increasing need to support the health and social care needs of those awaiting asylum decisions who have been accommodated locally. This requirement is over and above that provided by MEARS welfare staff on behalf of The Home Office.

3.2 Community Integration and benefit

There is a significant community benefit resulting from the integration of New Scots. Alongside the New Scots team, the HSCP commissions several third sector organisations to support individuals and families to integrate. This has led to those who arrived in Inverclyde as refugees now being involved in the local cricket club, junior football clubs, music and arts clubs and The Rotary Club. Inverclyde Council has also been able to employ refugees using the skills from the jobs they undertook in their home country.

3.3 Ukrainian Resettlement

In response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the Scottish Government has participated in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Ukrainian Super Sponsor Scheme (Warm Scottish Welcome). There are currently 211 Ukrainians residing with eighty-nine host families or in temporary accommodation across Inverclyde. Ninety-four individuals from 42 families have gone back to Ukraine. Two RSLs have brought void properties back in to use through Scottish Government funding. These are exclusively for the use of Ukrainians and nine properties remain available.

3.3.1 Locally the Scottish Government has commissioned Welcome Accommodation at the Gin House Hotel in Greenock. A move to closer alignment with the overall national New Scots Integration Strategy has been agreed nationally and a decrease in available welcome accommodation is underway. Pathways are in development to ensure those entering the country can be accommodated without the need for hotel accommodation. Initial £200 monetary payments have been made and the Advice team supports the Integration Team to ensure applications for Universal Credit and a range of other appropriate benefits are made. Children are enrolled within local schools however due to the location of available RSL accommodation there is a disproportionate impact on some schools. Employability support is in place to encourage the Ukrainian adults to seek employment and Your Voice Community Connectors help familiarise the residents with the local community if needed.

3.4 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Until recently Inverclyde Children & Families teams were supporting 5 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who arrived via the National Transfer Scheme. Since July '23 there have been a further 5 individuals presenting at The Holiday Inn stating they are under 18 and requiring an age assessment. In the interim period prior to funding being available and whilst assessment is underway, the HSCP requires to secure alternative accommodation/ placement. Funding will be made available for those assessed as under 18 however is unlikely to cover the costs of securing placements or an appropriate tenancy and required wraparound support. Any additional costs will require to be found from existing budgets which are already under considerable pressures.

The New Scots team continues to develop and implement new roles as necessary, and it is hoped that the recent addition of a newly qualified social worker will allow more flexibility and capacity to assess and support process for UASC moving forward. This will take some time to develop

and at present the Request for Assistance Team in Children & Families are taking the lead on each assessment resulting in additional service pressures.

3.5 Asylum Contingency hotel accommodation for those awaiting decisions.

Available capacity at the Holiday Inn Express is currently 69 single males. The Home Office announced their intention to increase the capacity to a maximum of 126 single males via room sharing and Inverclyde Council and the HSCP have met with Home Office colleagues around this. Letters have been issued to existing residents and new furniture has arrived. Several men have self-identified as being happy to share and have begun to do so in the past few days.

- 3.5.1 The HSCP has a small Asylum Health Team who carry out an initial assessment of anyone arriving at the Holiday Inn (or the welcome accommodation for Ukrainian citizens). They will support ongoing health needs, liaise with other health and third sector services and secondary care where necessary. There is currently no capacity to offer similar support to those in dispersed accommodation.
- 3.5.2 All GP practices within the catchment area of the Holiday Inn have closed lists. In order to register individuals, the health team are now required to do so through a single health board point of contact whereby a practice is then allocated. Those not registered with a GP can only access *Pharmacy First* in 2 of the 19 Community Pharmacies in Inverclyde. Neither of these are within Greenock where the Holiday Inn is located. Many of the men arriving require support from mental health services and the health team have explored ways to access support such as via the free Kooth online wellbeing community which is now being used in the hotel.
- 3.5.3 There is no additional funding for health services to support Asylum Seekers in Scotland. The HSCP has invested in a health support team from available funding across the range of existing resettlement schemes to minimise where possible the impact on Primary Care Services.

3.6 Dispersed accommodation for those awaiting decisions.

There are currently 47 individuals accommodated in 18 properties living in the community in a combination of private rented sector and Registered Social Landlord accommodation. The agreed dispersed bed space allocation for Inverclyde is 32 however despite no change to this agreement increased procurement is continuing. MEARS have a further 5 properties and 14 bed spaces approved within our local pipeline. MEARS have informed officers of a further 61 properties they plan to purchase from a private landlord, and it is thought that some RSLs are interested in identifying properties for the future pipeline.

- 3.6.1 A review of the national pipeline and appraisal of the Scottish market was presented to COSLA by MEARS. This highlighted the difficulty in procuring properties elsewhere in the country. Due to the cost and availability of properties for sale and the number of RSL voids in Inverclyde, increased procurement has taken place in the area.

3.7 Streamlined approach and increase in positive asylum decisions.

In August 2023 the Home Office announced they would take steps to ensure that support for those with both positive and negative decisions would stop as soon as their legal obligations end, to ensure asylum accommodation is freed up for those who are entitled to it. This had the impact of not only increased numbers of positive decisions being made but also led to the statutory notification timescales not being adhered to. For a period, timescales and demand were not able to be managed within the current Inverclyde Housing options process leading to homeless routes being pursued and service capacity impacted upon. Immediate lawful possession action is now undertaken by MEARS with key cancellation evictions occurring in the hotel for both positive and negative cessation cases.

3.7.1 Inverclyde is already experiencing the impact of the above. There have been increased numbers with positive decisions presenting to services since July, some with very short notice- as little as 3 days many of these are self-referring. The process for MEARS informing New to Scotland Team of decisions has improved however supporting individuals to secure suitable tenancies in short timescales is challenging. It is expected that the number of men requiring support with positive decisions will increase when the local contingency hotel rooms become double occupancy. This will impact on the capacity of homelessness services and new Scots team work to quickly accommodate people with a positive decision who now have a legal right to stay in the UK.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 HSCP officers will continue to work with all partners to support individuals with positive decisions and to develop the required pathways. HSCP officers will consider the range of data being supplied by the Home Office to project future demand and required capacity/ resources as far as possible.
- 4.2 Undertake a detailed piece of work to identify the cost implications on health and social care of supporting both those awaiting and receiving asylum decisions in Inverclyde.
- 4.3 Identify ways to proactively work with service users to identify at the earliest opportunity the likelihood of those awaiting decisions staying in Inverclyde after a positive decision and any intention to bring family over under the reunification scheme.
- 4.4 Identify and strengthen an appropriate pathway through the current housing options offer with RSLs for those with positive decisions regardless of notification period.
- 4.5 Undertake a detailed piece of development work to identify developments across the range of HSCP services, within existing budget, which assist those seeking or gaining asylum in Inverclyde to feel safe and supported.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial	X	
Legal/Risk	X	
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	X	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children and Young People	X	
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

5.2 Finance

Total earmarked reserves of £1.076m were held at 31 March 2022. Income for all schemes totalled £1.935m during 2022/23, with £0.822m of expenditure being incurred including costs for the New Scots team, other staffing, rental/property costs and third sector support. The net position at the 2022/23 year end resulted in an additional £1.113m being added to earmarked reserves. The revised balance as at 31 March 2023 is £2.190m.

The nature of the various schemes means that income is front loaded when refugees arrive, with related spend planned over a number of years. As additional income is claimed or notified, or new pressures are identified, Finance and New Scots team Service manager and officers update spending plans accordingly. The current balances, along with the current anticipated income and planned expenditure is as follows:-

	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Opening balance - earmarked reserve	(2,190)	(1,648)	(789)	(312)
Anticipated further income	(673)	(319)	(32)	(14)
Planned expenditure	1,215	1,178	509	326
Expected closing balance - earmarked reserve	(1,648)	(789)	(312)	0

Included in the income for 2023/24 financial year, is an amount of £0.150m which has only recently been received in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Scheme for the period October 2022 to September 2023. A detailed exercise is under way with finance colleagues to establish both direct and indirect costs related to asylum dispersal to inform future funding discussions with Scottish Government and the Home Office.

In addition to the specific income related to individuals arriving noted in the table above, the Ukrainian Resettlement fund of £30m Scotland wide has been notified to us with an allocation to Inverclyde of £0.403m for 2023/24 financial year. The fund is intended to help councils support all arrivals, including guests in short-term accommodation, to settle in Scotland and move into longer-term settled accommodation, reducing the reliance on hotels and other temporary accommodation.

Work is under way to establish related costs and ensure that the funds are allocated in the most appropriate manner.

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Various	EMR	2023/24 to 2026/27	N/A	N/A	Earmarked reserves held as at 31/3/23 - £2.190m. Planned additional income and expenditure noted in Table at 5.2, over a period of four financial years. Additional funds of £0.403m for Ukraine

					Resettlement – discussion under way to establish best use
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Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

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

5.3 Legal/Risk

There are potential legal and risk issues surrounding homelessness legislation and pathways are in place to as far as possible avoid the impact of those with positive decisions requiring presenting as homeless. Where a person receives a negative decision, they have no recourse to public funds. Anyone having no recourse to public funds (NRPF) will not be able to access most social security benefits, homelessness assistance and a local authority allocation of social housing, but in some cases may be able to receive accommodation and financial support from social services. For example, the local authority may have duties under social work legislation to support NRPF families with children, or vulnerable adults following assessment.

5.4 Human Resources

Additional staff have been employed in both the New Scots team and within community nursing services to support additional demand. This will remain under review with the addition of more staff should demand require it.

5.5 Strategic

The approach to support and integration of all New Scots supports the Three themes within the Inverclyde Council Strategic Plan 2023/28 and the outcomes within the Partnership Plan.

5.6 Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
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, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required. Provide any other relevant reasons why an EqIA is not necessary/screening statement.

(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 – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty for the following reasons: Provide reasons why the report has been assessed as not relevant.

(c) Children and Young People

Has a Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
x	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children’s rights.

5.7 Environmental/Sustainability

Summarise any environmental / climate change impacts which relate to this report.

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
x	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

5.8 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 – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None