

# Policy and Sustainability

**10.00am, Tuesday 22 February 2022**  
**Refugee Resettlement**

<b>Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments</b>	<b>Executive City-wide 34</b>
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## 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Committee is recommended to agree:
- 1.1.1 an increase in Edinburgh's refugee resettlement to a maximum of one hundred and fifty refugees per year across the different strands of UK Government resettlement including Community Sponsorship;
  - 1.1.2 that the exact number – which should not be fewer than one hundred people per year – will depend on the availability of quality sustainable housing and that all options within social housing and private rented sectors will need to be explored; and
  - 1.1.3 that Committee will be updated annually on the number of people resettled via the business bulletin.

**Amanda Hatton**

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## Refugee Resettlement

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 At its meeting of 10 June 2021, Policy and Sustainability Committee considered a petition requesting an increase in the number of refugees Edinburgh resettles per year. At a subsequent meeting of the City of Edinburgh Council on 26 August 2021 The City of Edinburgh Council passed the motion 'Welcoming Afghan Refugees' agreeing in principle that Edinburgh should contribute to Afghan refugee resettlement.
- 2.2 This report responds to Policy and Sustainability Committee's request for a report back on support provided to resettled refugees, updates committee on work to resettle Afghan refugees in the city and proposes a revised target for resettlement places offered.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 In May 2015, the City of Edinburgh Council agreed to resettle twenty-five refugees in the first year of involvement in the UK Government's small-scale Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement scheme. In September 2015, the scheme was expanded to resettle twenty-thousand refugees over five years and the city committed to providing places for five hundred people over that time.
- 3.2 During 2019, the UK Government announced plans for a single, global resettlement programme from 2020, the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). At its meeting of 25 February 2020, Policy and Sustainability Committee agreed to maintain Edinburgh's commitment to offering permanent resettlement to one hundred refugees per year. The start of the UKRS was delayed due to the COVID pandemic and the first Edinburgh households resettled under this scheme arrived in April 2021.
- 3.3 The total number of people resettled in Edinburgh to date since 2015 is five hundred and eighty-five. Five hundred and seventy-three people have been resettled by the Council with a further two households, comprising twelve people resettled by groups the Home Office has approved for resettling families under the Community Sponsorship strand of resettlement. Three more households have been

agreed for resettlement by the Council over the coming months and two further Edinburgh-based community organisations have submitted final applications for approval under the Community Sponsorship strand.

- 3.4 Since June 2021, there has been significant further development in refugee resettlement following allied forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan and the creation of two further schemes focussing on Afghan resettlement: ARAP (the Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Policy) and the ACRS (the Afghan Citizens' Relocation Scheme).

## **4. Main report**

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- 4.1 At its meeting on 10 June 2021, Policy and Sustainability Committee considered a petition submitted by Edinburgh Must Act which highlighted conditions in Greek refugee camps and asked the Council to:
- 4.1.1 increase the number of resettlement places it offers every year and
  - 4.1.2 engage with the Home Office to advocate for a change in policy to extend eligibility for the UK's managed resettlement schemes to refugees who have already travelled to mainland Europe and, specifically, the Aegean islands.
- 4.2 Following the meeting, the Council Leader wrote to the Home Office whose reply is included as appendix 1 to this report. The reply outlines a range of supportive measures the Home Office has put in place but gives no indication of a change to underlying policy. It remains open to the Council to consider an increase to its current commitment under existing resettlement schemes.
- 4.3 Committee further sought information on the support offered to households resettled in Edinburgh under UK Government Schemes. A description of the support provided in Edinburgh is therefore included at appendix 2 and information on the different resettlement schemes provided at appendix 3.
- 4.4 Members will recall the evacuation operation from Afghanistan in August and September 2021. Evacuees who arrived in the UK and others who have subsequently arrived from third countries have been offered temporary accommodation in hotels across the UK pending offers of permanent resettlement from local authorities under one of the two Afghan schemes.
- 4.5 Edinburgh has provided support for people in Edinburgh in temporary hotel accommodation on two occasions, initially for seventy-five people from early September till late October 2021 and subsequently for one hundred and forty-four people across two bridging hotels from January 2022. No households have been resettled permanently in Edinburgh as yet.
- 4.6 The Council motion of 26 August 2021 referenced the ongoing challenge of social housing capacity. In response to Afghan resettlement, eight properties with capacity for fifty-four people have been offered to the Private Sector Leasing (PSL) scheme by private landlords specifically for accommodating resettled refugees. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has also offered surplus army accommodation which could provide capacity for a further forty people although that is restricted to people

resettled under the ARAP scheme only. Supply of initial temporary accommodation is therefore secure.

- 4.7 Availability of permanent social housing remains a city-wide challenge. It is also important to note that Afghan families can require properties with four bedrooms or more, a configuration which is typically in extremely short supply within social housing stock. For both capacity and configuration reasons it is therefore highly likely that private rented sector options will need to play more of a role in resettlement accommodation in the future than it has to this point.
- 4.8 Other Scottish local authorities have already taken this approach and their experience suggests private rented sector options can be both achievable and sustainable for refugee families. Additionally, the UK Government has recognised the accommodation challenges facing local authorities and is offering additional funding specifically to secure larger properties where that will require rental payments in excess of Local Housing Allowance rates.
- 4.9 Accordingly, whilst mindful of the challenges of accommodation in the city, in recognition of the higher level of refugee resettlement being undertaken at UK level, an increase in the city's resettlement commitment to one hundred and fifty places per year across all strands of resettlement is considered appropriate and achievable without incurring unsustainable additional pressure on housing in the city. It is recommended that the initial focus should be on seeking permanent housing in Edinburgh for those currently in Afghan bridging hotel accommodation.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 If Committee approves the higher level of resettlement, Council Officers will advise the Home Office of Edinburgh's pledge of places for 2022/23 and work with the Home Office to identify local housing options for the families currently in hotel accommodation.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 Local authorities participating in resettlement receive a set amount of funding for each refugee they resettle phased over the period of support. Details of the funding and its phasing are included in appendix 2.
- 6.2 Funding received from the Home Office for resettlement has proven sufficient to cover all core staff, interpretation/translation, accommodation, equipment and furniture costs as well as the partner arrangements supporting ESOL provision described earlier in the report.
- 6.3 Apart from an allowance in the first year following resettlement – which is passed to the Additional Support for Learning service – education costs for children of school age are not covered by the scheme.

- 6.4 Edinburgh's resettlement programme is subject to a five-year rolling budget which includes a financial exit strategy in case the UK Government policy were to change policy and cease resettlement or alter the funding arrangements. Any significant future changes and their implications will be reported to committee outlining the change and its implications.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 Refugee resettlement is managed to minimise impacts on good community relations. Refugees resettled have reported a small number of negative community experiences, but these have been rare and generally linked to periods of broader community tension (e.g. the EU referendum, reported terrorist attacks). In evaluation data returned to the Home Office, the overwhelming majority of adults resettled (95%) report they either definitely agree (71.5%) or tend to agree (23.5%) that their local community is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Report to Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee 5 May 2015](#)  
8.2 [Report to Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee 22 September 2015](#)  
8.3 [Report to Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee 10 May 2016](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 Home Office reply to the Council Leader's letter of 28 September 2021  
9.2 Appendix 2 Edinburgh resettlement support  
9.3 Appendix 3 UK resettlement schemes – profile and funding

## Appendix 1 – Home Office Reply to the Council Leader



Home Office Home Office

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DECS Reference: TRO/0200033/21

7 December 2021

Dear Cllr McVey,

Thank you for your letter of 28 September 2021, about the irregular migrant situation in Greece as well as welcoming and supporting Afghan refugees in Edinburgh. Please note, you are receiving a response from a Home Office Official. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying to you – and note that policy in this space has moved on since the Home Office received your letter.

On 13 September 2021, the Government published a policy statement on Afghan resettlement, which can be viewed at:

[Afghanistan Resettlement and Immigration Policy Statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-statements/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement)

### **Irregular migration in Greece**

In April 2020, the UK and Greece signed a historic Migration Action Plan, signalling a firm commitment from both governments to increase cooperation as irregular migration into Europe via Greece remains high. The Action Plan strengthens the UK's relationship with one of its key partners in tackling irregular migration and will improve cooperation across a range of issues, including tackling Organised Immigration Crime, strengthening asylum and returns processes, and cooperation on border security issues.

We are pleased to report that there is significant work underway to increase the rate at which unaccompanied children, vulnerable persons and families are transferred to the Greek mainland so they can access dedicated support. This was part of a determined Greek government effort to transfer migrants out of the island camps by Easter 2021. We intend to increase our regular engagement with the Greek government on these plans to support progress.

Be assured, where we have concerns about the humanitarian conditions in the migrant camps in Greece and we have consistently raised our concerns with the Greek authorities at both official and Ministerial level. We are committed to supporting Greece's efforts to manage migration effectively. We urge all sides to uphold international law and international human rights standards in respect of the migrants and to avoid any actions that may endanger human life.

The UK Government responded to requests by the Greek Government to provide specific humanitarian goods, following the fire at the Moria migrant facility. The UK provided kitchen sets to nearly 2,000 vulnerable families to prepare and cook food, and solar lanterns to help them stay safe.

As the dynamic of the Mediterranean migration crisis has changed, so too has the UK's humanitarian response to it. Since early 2016, there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of refugees and migrants entering Greece due to the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and the closure of the Western Balkans route.

At the same time, substantial EU funding (€1.3bn) has been made available for Greece. The Greek Government has now taken over the humanitarian response with the use of EU funds. The issue is the capacity / willingness of the Greek Government to respond, not funding.

FCDO's humanitarian work in Greece (£39 million) came to an end in 2017, in agreement with the Greek government. We do not expect to provide further humanitarian support due to the availability of large amounts of EU funding.

### **Local Authority funding for support and accommodation**

We've seen over 300 local authorities come forward with commitments to take in displaced Afghans as part of our resettlement plans. The ongoing role of local authorities is vital to the Government's efforts and we are grateful for their continued offers of support and housing.

Local authorities will receive a generous funding package to support the resettlement of Afghan families who have come to the UK and are being urged to make offers of accommodation for those starting a new life in the UK.

We continue to work with local authorities to source appropriate accommodation as quickly as possible, although we have had to use hotels as a temporary measure due to unprecedented demand. In the meantime, we are providing wrap around support to enable families to start to build successful lives in the UK.

We have set up a bespoke local engagement team within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), with named points of contact for each region across the country, facilitating the process for local authorities to come forward with offers of accommodation – including larger properties to support bigger families - and develop strong local integration initiatives.

For Edinburgh, the named point of contact is Rosie Critchlow. Engagement with local authorities is working well and bringing about positive results and progress. The Local Engagement team are:

- Sharing what works well
- Adapting to the needs of the areas as required
- Proactively managing LAs concerns / answering questions.

Alongside engagement with local authorities, we are reaching out to landlords, developers and the wider private rented sector to encourage further offers of properties, either directly or through our Housing portal.

Local authorities who support people through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme will receive £20,520 per person, over 3 years, for resettlement and integration costs.

Local authorities and health partners who resettle families will also receive up to £4,500 per child for education, £850 for English language provision for adults requiring this support and £2,600 for healthcare.

Rent/Accommodation allowance of £15 per person, per day and cash support at variable rates – these allowances are payable for up to a maximum of 4 months or until mainstream benefits become payable.

A further £20 million of flexible funding will be made available to support local authorities with higher cost bases with any additional costs in the provision of services. In addition, the previously announced Afghan Housing Costs Fund will increase from £5 million to £17 million and run for 2 extra years to help local authorities provide housing and give certainty that funding will be available in the future.

The Social Security (Habitual Residence) Amendment Regulations 2021 which came into force on 15 September 2021 ensures that those on the relocation and resettlement schemes arriving in the UK are granted instant access to benefits as soon as they enter the country, matching their right to work in the UK from day one.

#### Further funding for NHS, DfE, DLUHC

The UK Government announced £3 million of additional NHS funding so that resettled Afghan nationals can access healthcare and register with a GP.

The Department for Education (DfE) is urgently making available at least an additional £12 million to local authorities to provide educational support and help Afghan children and young people settle into their local schools and communities.

DfE also recently announced that children and young people from Afghanistan will benefit from 6,000 laptops and tablets to support their education and help them adjust to life in this country.

This is backed by an overall £126 million investment to support disadvantaged children with their learning.

Additionally, DLUHC is supporting the Home Office to develop an integration package for the Afghan families, which includes a further 12-month support package for English (ESOL) of £850 per adult.

Thank you again for the concerns you have raised. I hope you are assured that we are giving the highest priority to establishing a successful Afghan resettlement scheme. We look forward to welcoming and supporting them as they build new lives here in the UK.  
Yours sincerely,

**A Wedgbury**

Email: [Public.Enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Public.Enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

## Appendix 2: Resettlement Support

- The Council has participated in the Syrian Resettlement Programme since September 2015 with all-party agreement to resettle 500 people (100 people per year) over the initial five-year lifetime of the scheme. The first families were re-settled in Edinburgh in November 2015. The programme is coordinated by the Council's Refugee and Migration Team (RMT).
- Edinburgh now hosts one hundred and seventy households, comprising five hundred and seventy people resettled under the Syrian and its successor UK Resettlement schemes. Most people arrive as family groups with a few individual resettlements. Receiving Councils commit to active support of refugees for up to five years for which they receive funding that phased over the period of support. Funding detail is set out in appendix 3.
- Each household is allocated a Refugee Integration Co-ordinator (RIC) who will usually work with the household throughout the period of support. Over the first couple of weeks, the RIC will support family members through the process of applying for benefits, registering with a GP, opening a bank account, registering for school places and getting to know their local neighbourhood.
- Adults arriving under the scheme have full entitlement to work and benefits from the day of arrival. The scheme provides for a resettlement grant of £50 per person per week until benefit or employment income starts. Households needing additional clothing are referred to the Edinburgh Clothing Store and/or Edinburgh City Mission's clothing bank.
- Furnished accommodation is initially provided through the Council's Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSL). Households are provisioned with food and household items sufficient to see them through their first week following arrival (augmented when quarantine has been necessary as a result of COVID travel regulations). The RMT then supports households to register with and bid for permanent housing through Edindex. Each household receives a furnishing package through the scheme when they move on from temporary PSL accommodation.
- All school age children are allocated places in Council schools where their learning is supported by the Council's English as an Additional Language service.
- English language teaching and cultural integration support is delivered through a public and third sector partnership. Council Lifelong Learning manages the programme, undertakes initial language assessment soon after arrival and delivers a range of classes centrally at South Bridge Resource Centre and in community settings (pre-COVID) which have moved online during the pandemic. Further activity is commissioned from The Welcoming Association (language teaching, cultural integration and IT skills) and Saheliya (women's language teaching, cultural integration and counselling). Advanced English speakers and continuing learners are referred into Edinburgh College's mainstream provision.
- In addition to day to day support, the RMT schedules monthly group sessions which offer information and discussion space on topics such as housing, legal rights and responsibilities, health service access, political rights and literacy and benefits.

- Twice a year the RMT schedules an employment fair bring employers and providers of training and voluntary opportunities together with the resettled group. Throughout the year, RICs work with adults of working age to identify employment options and aspirations and link people into mainstream provision offered by external partners such as Skills Development Scotland, Linknet, WEA, Fuse and Volunteer Centre Edinburgh.
- Health issues are generally coordinated through families' GP however where it's identified that additional support is required to access health services or in relation to a particular health condition the RMT works with external partners including NHS Lothian's Minority Ethnic Health Improvement Service (MEHIS), the River's Centre (trauma counselling), BEMAS (disability).
- Beyond the core support offered through the Refugee and Migration Team, resettlement in Edinburgh has benefitted from the contribution of Edinburgh's third sector and wider civic society. Although not an exhaustive list, support has included:
  - [Re-Act](#): provision of additional household items to families and particularly rucksacks containing age appropriate items for all resettled children. Delivery of a men's mental health group in collaboration with Multi-Cultural Family Base
  - [The Edinburgh Clothing Store](#): clothing packs for new arrivals
  - [The Edinburgh Weekend Club](#): originally facilitated by Scottish Faith Action for Refugees and now [Edinburgh City Mission](#): social events and cultural visits
  - Edinburgh New Scots Steering Group: discussion and coordination space for organisations contributing to refugee resettlement in Edinburgh
  - [The Welcoming Association](#) and Central Methodist Church: befrienders
  - [Multi-Cultural Family Base](#): providing additional support to children and families dealing with trauma through its Safe Haven Project and its men's mental health collaboration with Re-Act
  - [Bikes for Refugees](#): provision of bicycles, cycling equipment and training
  - [Edinburgh Remakery](#): provision of re-furbished laptops to refugee households
  - Big Hearts, Cricket Scotland, Spartans Community Football Academy: provision of sports-based activities
  - [Link Housing](#): provision of private sector leasing accommodation for newly arrived refugee households
  - George Heriot's: award of scholarships to children from refugee families

### Bridging Hotel Support

- The Council is funded to provide support to Afghan families in temporary bridging hotel accommodation. The support provided mirrors the initial elements of permanent resettlement support focussing on GP registration and health service access, DWP engagement, school registration, language assessment and learning, leisure access and activity provision, setting up bank accounts, befriending. The Refugee and Migration Team is working with many of the partners listed above to add to the core Council support and has benefitted from several spontaneous donations of clothes and toys.

- Links to the websites of many of the organisations contributing to the resettlement response have been included above so that members of the public can contact them directly if they wish to offer support. Anyone with an offer of support not covered by the organisations listed above can contact [resettlement@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:resettlement@edinburgh.gov.uk) where the team will direct the offer to the most appropriate responder.

## Appendix 3: UK Resettlement Schemes

### 1. United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons scheme closed to new arrivals on 25 February 2021 and was succeeded by the UKRS. The UKRS is a world-wide programme with eligible participants identified by the Home Office working with UNHCR. Criteria include having legal or physical protection needs, being a survivor of violence and/or torture, women and girls at risk. There is no UK Government target figure for UKRS resettlement with future numbers dependent on UK Government funding and local government capacity.

Resettled individuals have an immediate right to work and access to welfare benefits. Reception and integration support for up to five years is provided by receiving local authorities who receive funding of £20,520 per person as follows:

- Year 1: £8,520 per person (with additional education contributions of £2,250 for children aged 3-4 and £4,500 for children aged 5-18)
- Year 2: £5,000 per person
- Year 3: £3,700 per person
- Year 4: £2,300
- Year 5: £1,000 per person

Additional funding can be claimed for English for Speakers of Other Languages provision (ESOL: £850 per adult on arrival) and exceptional costs such as property adaptations, special educational needs (SEN) costs and void costs for delayed arrivals or hard to procure properties (eg four bedroom or more).

### 2. Community Sponsorship

Under the Community Sponsorship strand of resettlement, community groups can apply to the Home Office for permission directly to resettle a family and assume responsibility for its support for the first two years following arrival. Local authorities have a say in the authorisation process and successful groups take on the same range of responsibilities the Council discharges in its resettlement work. Local authorities receive the year 1 education funding for any children but no other Home Office money during the initial support period. Community groups must demonstrate the range of skills needed to resettle a family, evidence access to minimum funding of £9,000 and be able to provide housing for the full two years of support. After the first two years, if needed, the local authority can step in to provide a further three years' support for which it will receive the years 3, 4 and 5 funding outlined above. The local authority also retains a back-stop responsibility to step in and provide support if the community sponsorship relationship breaks down irreparably. To date, two organisations have resettled families under this strand and two further organisations have submitted applications to the Home Office.

### 3a. Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

This new scheme was launched by the UK Government on 1 April 2021 offering relocation and assistance to locally employed Afghan staff along with their immediate family. People resettled under this scheme include armed forces interpreters and cultural advisors and other employees such as British Council employees and embassy workers. As this is a relatively discrete cohort of people, it is not envisaged ARAP will be an ongoing scheme.

### 3b. Afghan Citizens Relocation Scheme (ACRS)

The UK Government announced shortly before Christmas that this additional scheme would open in January 2022 with a five-year target of resettling 20,000 people at risk who:

- have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech and rule of law
- are extremely vulnerable such as women and girls at risk and members of minority groups.

People resettled under both schemes have an immediate right to work and access to welfare benefits. Reception and integration support for up to three years will be provided by receiving local authorities who will receive funding of £20,520 per person as follows:

- Year 1: £10,500 (with additional education contributions of £2,250 for children aged 3-4 and £4,500 for children aged 5-18)
- Year 2: £6,000
- Year 3: £4,020

The same UKRS provisions for ESOL and exceptional cost funding apply to these two schemes. In recognition of the additional accommodation challenges posed by Afghan resettlement and particularly the size or properties required, there is further funding available to cover private rented property rates.