

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 25 February 2020

Refugee Resettlement

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	City-wide
Council Commitments	34

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended the Committee agree the continued participation of the City of Edinburgh in managed refugee resettlement with a commitment of resettling one hundred refugees per year.
- 1.2 Should UK Government policy on resettlement be subject to significant change in the future (ie numbers to be resettled or funding that supports resettlement) that change will be reported to the committee and further approval sought.

Alistair Gaw

Executive Director for Communities and Families

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Report

Refugee Resettlement

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report seeks approval for the Council's continued participation in managed refugee resettlement.

3. Background

- 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. This scheme, now called the Syrian Resettlement Programme, will conclude in March/April 2020.
- 3.2 During 2019, the UK Government announced plans to combine various managed resettlement programmes into one global resettlement programme from 2020. The UK is planning to resettle six thousand people through this programme during financial year 2020/2021 and is seeking resettlement pledges from local authorities.
- 3.3 Following the decision by COSLA Council Leaders in June 2019 to endorse participation in the new programme, this report seeks Council approval to continue refugee resettlement at the current level of one hundred people per year.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The City of Edinburgh Council has resettled four hundred and fifty-six people to date under the Syrian Resettlement Programme with a further twenty-five people accepted for resettlement in the coming weeks. The first families arrived in November 2015 and we remain on track to realise the city's commitment to resettle five hundred people before this phase of resettlement concludes. On average, one hundred people have been resettled in Edinburgh in each of the last four years. This rate of resettlement has proven sustainable and it is proposed that resettlement at this level continue.

Edinburgh Scheme Key Features

- 4.2 Support for people resettled under the scheme is provided by the Refugee and Migration Team in Safer and Stronger Communities. Each household is allocated a named support worker on arrival who works with them to coordinate initial registrations (DWP and Council benefits, GP, dentist, optician, library membership etc) and respond to their changing needs as resettlement progresses.
- 4.3 Initial accommodation for resettled refugees is sourced through the Council's existing Private Sector Leasing (PSL) scheme managed by Link Housing. Once accommodation is identified, the Syrian programme covers the cost of any void period until the property is occupied. This accommodation is temporary, and households are supported to register with EdIndex and bid for permanent Council/RSL housing in the usual way. Consistent with current bidding lead-times, people typically move into permanent tenancies around two years after arrival, the exact timing dependent on household need and profile.
- 4.4 Whilst the supply of initial accommodation has proven adequate for the number of people we have resettled, there have been challenges: ground-floor/accessible accommodation and properties with three or more bedrooms tend to be particularly difficult to source. Current accommodation capacity within the city suggests very limited scope for any increase on current levels of resettlement.
- 4.5 Proposals to increase the level of rent paid to PSL landlord may lead to a short-fall between housing benefit/housing cost payments and rent due – an issue already experienced by resettled families who have been subject to the benefit cap. As with any other PSL tenant in similar circumstances, this has been resolved through application for a discretionary housing payment (DHP) and we would continue to do this for future cases.
- 4.6 School-age children are allocated a school place appropriate to their age and need. They are supported in their attendance at school by the Council's Additional Support for Learning Service.
- 4.7 Adults have their ability to communicate in English assessed shortly after arrival. Advanced speakers are referred to mainstream English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) provision offered by Edinburgh College; all others are offered an individually-tailored programme of English learning which is delivered as a partnership between the Council and third sector partners. While people develop their English language skills, language support is provided by the team of Arabic and Kurdish-speaking interpreters sourced through the Council's Interpretation and Translation Service.
- 4.8 The overall ESOL programme, funded by the scheme, is managed by the Council Lifelong Learning service which also provides some forty-five hours of English tuition a week. Further language teaching and cultural integration activities (cultural visits, festive events) have been commissioned from third sector partners, The Welcoming Association and Saheliya. Another third sector partner, Multi-Cultural Family Base provides additional support for families with children.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If the Committee approves continued involvement in resettlement, Council Officers will advise the Home Office of the City of Edinburgh Council's pledge of places for 2020/21.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Local authorities participating in the Syrian programme receive a set amount of funding for each refugee they resettle. The funding is front-loaded in the first year following arrival and tapers sharply over the subsequent four years. This same funding arrangement will apply to resettlement under the new programme.
- 6.2 Funding received from the Home Office for the Syrian programme 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. Based on past years, this would entail future costs for around thirty school-age pupils per year.
- 6.4 The city resettlement programme is subject to a five-year rolling budget which includes a financial exit strategy in the event UK Government policy were to change and cease resettlement or alter the funding arrangements. Should any such significant change occur, the committee will receive a further report outlining the change and its implications.
- 6.5 If the Committee decides not to continue resettlement, the five years' of Home Office funding is sufficient to enable the programme and existing team to wind down over the next four years until a skeleton programme is left in financial year 2023/24 at the end of which the final resettled households would exit Council support.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 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 (eg 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

- 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

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - Letter from Director of Resettlement, Asylum Support and Integration, Home Office.



20 December 2019

Dear local authorities,

UK Resettlement Scheme – pledges to resettle refugees

The Government is committed to supporting and safeguarding vulnerable people who seek protection in the UK through resettlement and asylum routes. We could not do this without the ongoing commitment and support of local authorities and your communities. I would like to thank you for the important contribution local authorities, such as yours, make to resettlement, the asylum system, or both.

On 17 June, the then Minister of State for Immigration and the Minister for Faith wrote to your Leader to tell them about the new UK Resettlement Scheme. Since then we know that many of you have been considering how to start, or continue, contributing to the UK resettlement effort. In the year 2020-21, we aim to resettle in the region of 5,000 refugees. I am grateful to those who have already indicated your clear commitment to support this important humanitarian effort.

We intend the start of the new scheme to follow seamlessly the arrival of the 20,000th refugee through the existing Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme. We have begun to receive referrals under the new scheme from UNHCR and anticipate arrivals from early April.

To ensure a smooth flow of arrivals through transition we now need a fuller picture of the number of places that local authorities across the UK are able to offer. Therefore, it would be helpful if you could **please let your Regional Strategic Migration Partnership know, by Friday 31 January, how many refugees you will pledge to resettle in 2020-21**. In some authorities, you may still be working through your decision-making process. If that is the case, please do let us know: this is certainly not the final opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to the UK Resettlement Programme.

If you wish to clarify aspects of the scheme, please **get in touch with your Regional Strategic Migration Partnership or your Resettlement Contact Officer who will be happy to help**.

In talking about numbers, it might be possible to lose sight of the individual lives that we are impacting positively, and in many cases saving, through our resettlement schemes. We know that behind each successful resettlement is a huge amount of planning and ongoing hard work. Thank you again for your invaluable support for resettlement through the current schemes, as well as your support for those who arrive through asylum routes. I look forward to hearing from you in relation to the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Carr', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kate Carr

Director of Resettlement, Asylum Support and Integration