

# Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 1 October 2024

## Support for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Displaced People

Executive/routine  
Wards

Routine  
All

### 1. Recommendations

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1.1 Committee is asked to note the report.

#### **Amanda Hatton**

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## Support for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Displaced People

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report provides the first six-monthly update on support for Refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people as requested by Committee at its meeting on 27 February 2024.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The City of Edinburgh Council has been involved with UK Government resettlement schemes since November 2015. The city is currently committed to resettling 150 people per year.
- 3.2 Since March 2022, the Council has coordinated a response to the humanitarian crisis resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. During this period, the Home Office has also extended asylum dispersal to all local authorities across the UK.

### 4. Main report

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- 4.1 Edinburgh continues to support delivery of the UK Government's UK Resettlement Scheme as well as UK and Scottish Government schemes relating to Afghan (UK Government) and Ukraine (Scottish Government) resettlement.
- 4.2 In the six months since Committee was last updated Edinburgh has:
- resettled 17 people under the UK Resettlement schemes (total to date: 633)
  - resettled 54 people under the UK Government's Afghan relocation schemes (total to date: 288)
  - opened discussions with an existing local community sponsorship group with a view to their resettling a further household in the coming year
  - supported a further 18 people with a refugee background who have arrived in Edinburgh outwith formal resettlement schemes
- and currently:

- supports 103 adults and 61 dependents with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds (NRPF)
- hosts 155 single male asylum seekers and 1 asylum-seeking household in property managed by Mears Group (the Home Office's asylum accommodation provider in Scotland).

## Ukraine

- 4.3 Since February 2024 the trend away from significant numbers of new arrivals toward longer term support of people already in Scotland has continued. Nonetheless, a further 167 Ukrainians have arrived in Edinburgh (total arrivals to date: 11,309).
- 4.4 The Ukraine service continues to support 800 Ukrainians residing in Scottish Government procured temporary welcome accommodation settings (hotels or apartments) and 1,000 Ukrainians residing in hosted accommodation. A further 132 Ukrainians have been supported to move from those temporary settings into longer term tenancies within Edinburgh (total to date: 227).
- 4.5 Additionally, the Council is supporting 99 Ukrainian households through homelessness prevention and statutory homelessness duties. This includes 72 households who have been assessed as homeless and offered/provided with temporary accommodation, 7 households who are currently being actively supported to avoid falling into homelessness, and 20 households who have successfully moved out of homelessness.

## Strategy Development

- 4.6 Edinburgh's long-standing commitment to welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum has been set out in this and previous reports to committee. The first steps toward developing an Edinburgh resettlement/integration strategy were taken in late 2023, building on relationships developed during the city's response to Ukraine, where a multi-agency approach was critical to the operation's success.
- 4.7 The City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Voluntary Organisation's Council (EVOC) hosted the 'New Scots: Strength through Partnership Edinburgh Gathering' event at Easter Road Stadium in November 2023. The event was attended by over 100 colleagues with lived experience, practitioners (statutory and third sectors), senior managers and community-based volunteers.
- 4.8 This event was a valuable opportunity to engage with sector partners face-to-face, reflect on experiences post COVID-19 and lead into work to develop an Edinburgh specific New Scots strategy/delivery plan: [New Scots Edinburgh](#). Since that initial meeting, quarterly 'huddle' events have been held to keep stakeholders informed and engaged and a second sector-wide engagement event is scheduled for early December 2024.

- 4.9 The Edinburgh level plan is intended to complement but not necessarily mimic existing national plans. The Scottish Government, COSLA and Scottish Refugee Council launched the refreshed [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#) in March 2024 and a subsequent [implementation plan](#) on 5 July 2024.
- 4.10 In addition to the national strategy and implementation plan, development of the strategy is built on key documents which include research published by [Glasgow University](#), the [Home Office](#) and the [Commission on Integration of Refugees](#). Finally, the Scottish Government has recently published an [analysis of the engagement process](#) that informed development of the New Scots Strategy's latest iteration. The drafting group for the Edinburgh plan has asked for and anticipates receiving the specific Edinburgh level input that was part of this process.
- 4.11 The strategy is based around the following identified from feedback at the November 2023 gathering event:
- Communities, Culture and Creativity
  - Education
  - Employment
  - ESOL
  - Health and Wellbeing
  - Housing
  - Languages
  - Sport and Leisure
  - Governance.
- 4.12 Cross-cutting issues such as – gender, ethnicity, human-trafficking – will be addressed within each of the themes. The planned development process is modular with text for each theme worked up by a core drafting group (members detailed at Appendix 1) with input from wider reference groups with relevant professional and lived experience (also at appendix 1). When ready, draft text will be circulated to stakeholders for consultation then amended in light of the feedback received.
- 4.13 Communities, Culture and Creativity is the first theme to have been released for consultation, as of late August 2024.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 Subject to any further recommendation by Committee, work will continue as outlined in this report with amendments from time to time in light of changes to Government or Council policy and feedback from the communities we work with.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 The detail of funding arrangements was previously reported to committee on 27 February 2024. There have been no changes in the interim and resettlement funding remains sufficient to cover associated core staff, interpretation/ translation, accommodation (including void), equipment and furniture costs as well as ESOL and cultural integration activities.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1 All groups covered in this report are at risk of socio-economic disadvantage through a range of factors that include unfamiliarity with language and culture, disrupted education and career development and physical or mental trauma associated with their status as a refugee. The goal of resettlement is to mitigate these risks to the fullest extent possible and enable people to live full, independent lives.

## **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

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- 8.1 Resettlement services seek to mitigate climate impacts arising from its activities in in the following ways:
- encouraging all people who are resettled to use public transport. This is facilitated by supporting applications for bus passes for everyone eligible for free bus travel and providing bus passes to all other resettled clients for one year from resettlement in Edinburgh. Anecdotal evidence suggests this element of provision is popular and widely used. Specific feedback on bus pass usage levels and patterns will be sought during qualitative evaluation work scheduled for October/November 2024 and included in the next six-monthly update to committee.
  - encouraging active travel through referrals to Bikes for Refugees and provision of walking tours of Edinburgh organised by colleagues in Lifelong Learning
  - organising ESOL classes in a range of central and community venues across the city
  - offering flexible working options for colleagues and virtual appointments for clients wherever appropriate
  - referring newly arrived clients to the Welcoming Association's Climate Change project for home energy advice.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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- 9.1 Refugee resettlement is managed with regard to potential for 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 international conflict or reported terrorist attacks). In evaluation data returned to the Home Office in December 2023, the 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.

- 9.2 Members will have been aware of recent community tensions that resulted in the targeting of asylum facilities in England. Following these incidents, the Chief Executive called a special meeting of the Edinburgh Partnership, chaired by the Council Leader, to ensure local partners were well linked and ready to respond if intelligence suggested a likelihood of any such occurrence in Edinburgh.
- 9.3 During this time, Council officers maintained contact with agencies responsible for operation of any hotel settings (including Mears Group/Home Office for the two asylum hotels in Edinburgh) and were assured they had appropriate plans in place and were aware of appropriate routes of communication and escalation should any incidents occur.
- 9.4 Since the last update to committee, there have been several developments that it is hoped will lead to an improved strategic coherence between the different humanitarian responses:
- within the context of asylum dispersal, the Home Office has developed a place-making tool which collates data on local pressures (including pre-existing commitments to humanitarian programmes) to inform dispersal planning
  - two subject specific meetings – the Scottish Asylum Partnership Board and the UK Afghan Resettlement Local Authority Network – have adjusted their agendas to encompass the wider range of the humanitarian responses in which local authorities are engaged
  - the Council is participating in a recently commenced Home Office exercise designed to identify costs incurred across the range of humanitarian responses (including resettlement and asylum).
- 9.5 As noted in previous reports, the city's current Housing emergency is a material risk in terms of resettlement operations and particularly in relation to Ukraine.

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

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- 10.1 [Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee, 5 May 2015, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme](#)
- 10.2 [Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee, 22 September 2015, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme](#)
- 10.3 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, 25 February 2020, Refugee Resettlement](#)

- 10.4 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, 10 June 2021, Petition for Consideration, Resettle Refugees and Asylum Seekers from the Aegean Camps in Edinburgh](#)
- 10.5 [City of Edinburgh Council, 26 August 2021, Motion: Welcoming Afghanistan Refugees](#)
- 10.6 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, 22 February 2022, Refugee Resettlement](#)
- 10.7 [City of Edinburgh Council, 17 March 2022, Motion: Russian Invasion of Ukraine](#)
- 10.8 [Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 27 February 2024, Support for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Displaced People](#)
- 10.9 [NRPF Guidance for Scottish Local Authorities](#)

## **11. Appendices**

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Appendix 1 – Contributors to the New Scots Strategy Development

## Appendix 1 – Contributors to the Edinburgh New Scots Strategy Development

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We gratefully acknowledge the involvement of the following people/organisations in the strategy development process:

### **Strategy Drafting Group**

Wendy Ager: Co-chair Edinburgh New Scots Steering Group

Dr Esa Aldegheri: research associate with the UNESCO Chair for refugee integration through language and the arts (RILA) in the School of Education at Glasgow University.

Alistair Dinnie: Refugee and Migration Programme Manager, The City of Edinburgh Council

John Hawryluk: Senior Leader (Communities), EVOC

Dr Alison Strang: Senior Research Fellow Emeritus at the Institute for International Health and Development, Queen Margaret University Edinburgh.

### **Refence groups/Stakeholders**

SHAPE/Cyrenians

Capital City Partnership

The Welcoming

Barnardo's Scotland

Media Education

EVOC

SOHTIS (Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland)

Project Esperanza

New Scots Edinburgh Steering Group

Edinburgh College

Scottish Refugee Council

Networking Key Services (NKS)

Edinburgh University

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