

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	November 2019
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Bobby Feeley/Phil Gilroy
Report author	Katie Newe
Title	Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme

1. What is the report about?

The report provides information about the progress of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) within Denbighshire as the Home Office brings this scheme to an end and replaces it with a new and wider Global Resettlement Scheme from April 2020 onwards. This report seeks cabinet approval to continue the resettlement of refugees under this new revised scheme. Consensus from Home Office consultation held in 2018, was that a future scheme should:

- Continue to focus on the most vulnerable refugees
- Adopt a global model to ensure that we can be more responsive to refugee crises around the world
- Consolidate our different schemes to make them simpler to operate and for the public to understand
- Continue to be sustainable and well-funded, recognising the constraints on local authority capacity
- Support the long-term integration of resettled refugees.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To provide Cabinet with an update on progress made in Denbighshire with the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme. It is important that Denbighshire is fully involved in the new Global Resettlement Programme, in the same way as all other local authorities in Wales and Cabinet will be able to see from this report that we have established the arrangements necessary to enable us to offer accommodation for additional families with resettlement needs.
- 2.2 A decision is required on the continuation of a revised Global Resettlement Programme, dependent upon the terms and financing of such a scheme once published by the Home Office.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That Cabinet confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1) as part of its consideration.
- 3.2. That Cabinet agrees to continue to support the settlement of refugees in Denbighshire through the Global Resettlement Scheme dependent upon the terms and financing of such a scheme once published by the Home Office.

4. Report details

- 4.1 A new global resettlement scheme for vulnerable refugees is being created from next year, replacing the current programmes and welcoming in around 5,000 more refugees in the UK. The new initiative will consolidate the Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme, the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and the gateway protection programme into a single scheme.
- 4.2 Refugees will also be taken in from beyond the Middle East and Africa, where the current focus is. The UK will aim to resettle refugees at current levels, adding to the nearly 16,000 refugees who have already found safety here since 2015.
- 4.3 The new programme will be simpler to operate and aim to provide greater consistency in the way refugees are resettled. A new process for emergency resettlement will also be developed, providing a faster route to resettlement where lives are at risk
- 4.4 All applicants will continue to be subject to the usual immigration checks and screening prior to a visa being granted. Those with a criminal past or links to war crimes or extremism are excluded from the Scheme.
- 4.5 The 'Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan' is the latest step towards the government's ambition of making Wales a nation of sanctuary for all who choose to make it their home. It renews the Welsh Government's commitment of working with the UK Government, local authorities, the Welsh Refugee Coalition and people seeking sanctuary themselves to achieve equality of opportunities, including access to resources and mainstream services. It also recognises the valuable skills and experiences which refugees and asylum seekers can bring with them to enhance Welsh communities.
- 4.6 What has gone well?
 - Denbighshire have successfully resettled 18 families since the project commenced in April 2016 and are on track to achieve the target figure of 20 families by end of March 2020.
 - 55 individuals have been resettled and are supported by a number of agencies. We have also had 6 Welsh babies born since the project began.
 - All families have been supported to take full responsibility for paying their rent.
 - DCC, DWP and Working Denbighshire attending the weekly drop in to resolve any queries and answer questions.

- The families have been accommodated across the whole of the County with the majority living in Rhyl.
- Two individuals are accessing volunteer and employment placements in Denbighshire. One other individual is accessing volunteer placement in a local nursery.
- Individual are learning English to enable them to pass their driving theory tests.
- Establishing families with local families has worked well and been supportive.
- Funding for Year 1 in school has been useful to provide Bilingual Teaching Support Assistant (BTSA) support
- Post 16 Syrian students accessing ESOL classes in Coleg Menai, Bangor has been a positive step and ensuring the right level for their learning.

4.7 What we can improve

- The intention was that the families would take on full responsibility of the tenancy themselves after 12 months but only one family has a tenancy direct with landlord –Denbighshire continues to support the other tenancies by way of a lease and then subletting to the individual families.
- On-going issues with housing conditions and claims of damp and condensation. Instances have been found to result from cultural lifestyle choices (no ventilation, on-going use of heating) rather than property conditions.
- Not all families are actively accessing ESOL.
- Families struggle to access dental and health services due to access to interpreters.
- Interpretation issues around accessing employment and training.
- Community Sponsor Scheme has only partially worked in Llangollen area
- Education funding is too short term - longer term funding for Years 2 – 5 would ensure support was on-going towards good outcomes for learners

4.8 What have we learnt?

- There are varying barriers to attending ESOL classes, from transport and child care, to age and health problems.
- Levels of formal education families have received in Syria from some having little or no formal education and are not literate in their own language, to others who have attended university and are highly qualified (but their qualifications may not be recognised in the UK and transferable).
- Type of employment previously undertaken can also vary vastly where health and safety and qualifications are not a necessity or a requirement in obtaining work.
- Individuals are accessing driving lessons and learning English to enable them to pass their theory tests. One individual aiming to pass HGV licence.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The project contributes to the corporate priorities to work with people and communities to build independence and resilience. We will support the families to build strong support networks to ensure they are integrated into their local community.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1 Based on Denbighshire accepting five families per year for the next five years, the funding received from the Home Office for the period 2020/21 to 2029/30 would be in the region of £3m. Approximately 58% of the funding would be used to settle families based on individual need and 42% would be available for DCC and third party organisation support.
- 6.2 Other services (besides CSS) in Denbighshire would be key partners in the resettlement programme with all costs being funded via Home Office funding.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1 The Global Refugee Resettlement Project contributes to Denbighshire's well-being goals and any risks are considered and managed appropriately.
- 7.2 There will be minimal negative impact in supporting this programme due to the good practise and knowledge gained from the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Project.
- 7.3 The project contributes to the corporate priorities to work with people and communities to build independence and resilience. We will support the families to build strong support networks to ensure they are integrated into their local community

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

N/A

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

It is welcome that continued Government Funding will be available to fund this service area. This highlights the excellent partnership working that has underpinned the service delivery.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

During the last 4 years, we have learned a great deal about Syrian refugees and their cultures. When the project becomes Global, we will need to understand and learn about new cultures and values to support the new refugees. We will need to work closely with landlords in the private rented sector to ensure that appropriate accommodation is sourced to enable us to fulfil our commitment to resettle five families / individuals every year.

11. Power to make the decision

For Cabinet to approve the decision to support the Global Resettlement Office as per Home Office request.