

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children and Young People Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	14th March 2017	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Update on Un-Accompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and Syrian Refugee Families	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: N/A		

1. **Current Position;**

1.1 The Council accepted 25 individuals (5 families) during 2015/16 under the Home Office Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme.

1.2 The Council has also accepted a total of 13 unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Eight of these have been accommodated in foster care since June 2016 when the government requested the support of Councils in the National Transfer Scheme.

1.3 The Council has also received many offers of support from local residents, voluntary organisations, faith groups and other organisations in assisting resettlement.

1.4 At a meeting in November 2016, with the Chief Executive and other local groups who are keen to support to refugees it was agreed that the Council support a second wave of refugee families in the Spring of 2017. The support for this second wave of families will come primarily from volunteers, but the offer could not progress until further discussion has taken place on identifying accommodation options for any families.

2; Current Funding Programmes;

2.1.1 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme

2.1.2 The SVPR scheme prioritises help for survivors of torture and violence, women and children at risk, and those in need of medical care. UNCHR works with Home Office to identify suitable cases.

2.1.3 Those who are accepted under SVPR are granted humanitarian protection giving them leave to remain for 5 years with full access to employment and public funds and rights to family reunion comparable to refugees. At the end of the 5 years, if they have not been able to return to Syria, they may be eligible to apply for settlement in the UK. Settlement may be refused if the person is convicted of a criminal offence during their leave and will be refused if they pose a danger to the public, or to national security.

2.2 Dublin Treaty:

2.2.1 Between 160 and 300 children could be transferred to the UK to be resettled with relatives under the Dublin III Treaty; a 'few hundred' children will be brought to the UK imminently via the 'Dubs Amendment', which will be a mixture of children being resettled with relatives and unaccompanied children. We are being asked to offer **emergency foster or other suitable placements** particularly for those arriving now. The majority of these will be for under 16s and girls, but there are also approximately 32 male over 16s for whom the Home Office need additional temporary placements in supported accommodation while the family viability assessments take place. We have been asked to bring forward any **long term placements** we have to settle an unaccompanied child in our area on a voluntary basis so that the needs of children can be met in an equitable way around the country.

2.3 Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme including the National Transfer Scheme

2.3.1 In April 2016 the Government committed to resettle up to 3000 children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region over the life of the current Parliament under the Children at Risk UNHCR vulnerability category. They aspire to resettle several hundred people in the first year. The vast majority of children will arrive with their parents, with the remainder arriving with other carers or on their own. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) applies where a child arriving in one local authority area may be transferred to another council with enhanced capacity.

2.3.2 The government funds local authorities caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (aged under 16) is £41,610 per year.

3 Key issues:

3.1 Resourcing and capacity

3.1.1 An officer working group has been convened to consider specific referrals (comprising Strategy & Performance / Housing / Adult Social Care / Children Social Care / Public Health / Clinical Commissioning Group / Sirona and others) co-ordinated by Strategy & Performance. Liaison with Home Office and UNHCR is led by Strategy & Performance.

3.1.2 Currently the Connecting Families team provides support to the resettled families. The Connecting Families team stated they have capacity to continue this.

3.2 Finance

3.2.1 Local Housing allowance

3.2.2 The Council initially used CURO housing for the first five families. Using the choice based lettings process; as refugees arrive in the UK they have full recourse to public funds and it was assessed that they were at the 'top of the waiting list' due to their specific vulnerabilities. We acknowledge this is not a sustainable method of securing housing and that we need to secure private rentals.

3.2.3 We have been unable to secure any private rented housing in order to accept refugee families due to the inflated cost of private rented housing. (We do not recommend subsidising rent from the Home Office allowance as this is not sustainable and may lead the family into debt).

3.2.4 We are in discussion with Home Turf (DHI) to assist us in finding and managing affordable private lettings. Initial indicators are that there have been no affordable properties on the market recently.

3.3 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme - finance

3.3.1 Home Office funding is available to local authorities under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme and is currently provided for 5 years on a sliding scale to provide support. (This is inclusive of any management costs to administer the scheme)

- Year 1: £8500 per person
- Year 2: £5000 per person
- Year 3: £3700 per person
- Year 4: £2300 per person
- Year 5: £1000 per person

3.3.2 Extra funding towards education costs are:

- Children age 5 -18: £4500 per year
- Children age 3 – 4: £ 2250 per year

3.3.3 Provision for medical costs are on a case by case basis and are paid for and claimed back from the Home Office directly by B&NES CCG

3.3.4 People resettled under the SVPR programme have recourse to public funds (including to cover housing costs), as well as allowing people to receive training and to enter employment.

3.4 National Transfer Scheme - finance

3.4.1 Government funding to local authorities caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (aged under 16) annually: £41,610.

4 Recommendations:

4.1 That we continue in discussions with Home Office re: receiving further refugees through SVPR, UASC etc.

4.2 That we continue to attempt to secure affordable housing and negotiate that a third party (Home Turf Lettings or similar) manage the property on our behalf and that their management fee is taken from the year 1 per capita allowance. Years 2-5 to be decided / negotiated. To this end it is recommended that we pay void fees where necessary to secure properties prior to occupation and make a claim to the Home Office to cover the void costs at the end of year 1 (this would not be possible if we hold an underspend).

4.3 That we continue to pursue options with the Home Office re: increasing our funding to cover the LHA gap.

4.4 That we continue our discussions re Community Sponsorship with any interested parties.

4.5 We have recently heard from Curo that they are interested in offering some of their properties for some Syrian families. Whilst this might eventually be an offer the Council would wish to accept, it will be important that we fully understand and explore this prior to any formal agreement. Should we pursue this option the Council will need to ensure we articulate a balanced position that sets out the needs of these families alongside also meeting local housing need.

Contact person	<i>Richard Baldwin; 01225 396289</i>
Background papers	Children Act 1989
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	