

**Report To:** Policy and Resources Committee      **Date:** 14 November 2017

**Report By:** Louise Long  
Corporate Director, Chief Officer  
Inverclyde HSCP      **Report No:** SW/45/2017/AH

**Contact Officer:** Andrina Hunter  
Service Manager  
Inverclyde HSCP      **Contact No:** 01475 715285

**Subject:** Refugee Schemes and other Migration Issues

---

## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the current involvement in the two refugee resettlement schemes; the Afghan Scheme and the Syrian Scheme; and this positive resettlement programme within Inverclyde.
- 1.2 To update the Committee on the progress regarding involvement with other schemes including the Vulnerable Children's Scheme, the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children's Scheme (UASC) scheme, and becoming a dispersal area for newly arrived asylum seekers.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Inverclyde is participating in two refugee resettlement schemes and since 2014 has resettled 18 Afghan families and 11 Syrian families. Currently 19 families are living within Inverclyde, with resettlement support provided by the HSCP Refugee support team. The families have had a positive experience with resettlement within Inverclyde and actively participate within the local community and many community activities.
- 2.2 Discussions are ongoing nationally regarding the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children's Scheme (UASC) which involves the dispersal of UASC from English local authorities, primarily Kent, to Councils in Scotland. The Vulnerable Children's Scheme brings vulnerable refugee children with adult family members, not necessarily the parents, to the UK from North Africa and the Middle East. In addition, the Home Secretary has also recently announced an extension of the Syrian Scheme to include refugees from other countries who had been living in Syria when the conflict began.
- 2.3 Previous reports to Committee have advised that the Home Office can use their powers to disperse newly arrived asylum seekers anywhere in the UK. The Home Office has approached Inverclyde Council to ask if it will be prepared to become an asylum dispersal area and discussions are continuing with them regarding this.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the Committee acknowledge the progress of the Council's commitment to the existing refugee schemes and the success of the resettlement to date.
- 3.2 That the Committee review participation in the current refugee schemes and commence involvement in the Vulnerable Children's Scheme with a recommendation that the numbers be increased incrementally over the next 3 years to 60 families in total. (Approximately 12 new

families/year).

- 3.3 That Officers from Inverclyde continue discussions with the Home Office, the Scottish Government and CoSLA, along with other local authorities, to secure the most favourable arrangements, including financial, to allow the dispersal of UASC to Scotland.
- 3.4 That dialogue continue with the Home Office to voluntarily become an asylum dispersal area and to consider the potential impact of any dispersal schemes on the local area and community. The agreed numbers to be accepted into the area would be in the region of 16 to 20, should Inverclyde conclude negotiations with the Home Office satisfactorily.

**Louise Long**  
**Corporate Director (Chief Officer)**  
**Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership**

#### **4.0 AFGHAN AND SYRIAN REFUGEE SCHEMES**

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council initially committed to support the resettlement of 12 Afghan families and 10 Syrian families through participation in the Afghan Locally Engaged Staff Ex-Gratia Scheme and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.
- 4.2 To date a total of 29 families have been resettled in Inverclyde (18 Afghan and 11 Syrian) although 10 families have left the area, all Afghan, for a variety of reasons. These include a desire for religious instruction for the children, access to a larger Afghan community, availability of halal meat and greater job opportunities. Access to a mosque, rather than a prayer room, was also cited. There are currently 39 adults and 29 children in the area, with the children's ages ranging from 11 months to 15 years.
- 4.3 Both schemes come with a viable financial support package from the Home Office and this helps to ensure that families are supported to integrate into the local community and are able to access appropriate services. The funding has been used to support the integration of the families and to establish an HSCP Refugee Integration Team comprising a Coordinator and two support workers.
- 4.4 A multi-agency Migration Steering Group, chaired by the HSCP, was established to ensure a cohesive partnership approach was taken to ensuring the resettlement programmes have been delivered. The families have settled well to life in Inverclyde with all of the children attending nursery or school and all are integrating and adapting. Funding has been given to the Council's Community Learning and Development Team and West College Scotland to provide language support and, in addition, the HSCP has successfully bid for additional funding from the Home Office to support childcare provision within the ESOL sessions.
- 4.5 In order to help further cohesion within the community, volunteering opportunities for local people to work with the refugees and for the refugees to be able to access volunteering opportunities is being supported by the local Volunteer Centre.
- 4.6 The families have engaged well and most have taken the opportunities to participate in a range of community projects and events including:
  - Working with Your Voice to bring both the local community and the new Scots refugees together, including the "Bazaar" event, two Eid celebrations, befriending etc.
  - Families attending cookschool to learn about different types of food and cooking and being able to work towards food hygiene qualifications.
  - Computer classes on a regular basis to help teach families how to deal with new technology, including internet, e-mails etc.
  - Group sessions with staff from Financial Fitness, iHeat and Greenock Morton providing money and energy advice and sports activities to refugee family members.
  - Group activities with the Forestry Commission, including visits to Finlaystone Country Park and Eid in the woods in Falkirk, further events are being planned.
- 4.7 The Afghan Scheme is likely to conclude in March 2018 therefore it is unlikely that we will be asked to resettle many more Afghans however the Home Secretary has recently announced an expansion of the Syrian Scheme which would see refugees from other countries who had been living in Syria before the conflict began, being eligible to come to the UK. This would include refugees from Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia. As part of this expansion, the Council will be able to determine which nationalities would be accepted and, obviously, Arabic speakers would be most suitable as that is the language of many of our resettled families.
- 4.8 Given the success of the Council's approach to date, it is recommended that Inverclyde continues to be involved in these schemes and propose that the number of families to be

accepted increased to 60 families over the next 3 years.

## **5.0 UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC) AND THE VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SCHEME**

- 5.1 Following recent changes in central Government policy, there are now two principal schemes in which the Home Office is asking local authorities to become involved. The first is the National Dispersal Scheme which involves dispersing 1,000 UASC, mainly from Kent, to local authorities across the UK. These are children who have made their own way to the UK and require accommodation and support.
- 5.2 There is currently no legal mechanism which would allow for the transfer of UASC from a local authority in England to a local authority in Scotland. This has been raised with central Government and a suitable amendment to legislation is currently under active consideration. The Westminster Government has also included powers in the Immigration Act 2016 to allow it to disperse UASC's across local authorities. However, this will require affirmative resolution by Scottish Ministers as well as a change in child care legislation.
- 5.3 The funding for the dispersal of UASC fails, by some distance, to meet the actual costs involved in supporting and accommodating these young people and discussions are ongoing with the Scottish Government and the Home Office to resolve this. Officers from Inverclyde are involved in this process.
- 5.4 In order to plan for any potential for a future UASC programme within Inverclyde, officers from HSCP Children and Families service and the Refugee Support team have started to scope suitable resettlement models. Inverclyde HSCP is committed to providing the same high standard of care to UASC children and young people as they do for any looked after child therefore the same good practice models will be applied. HSCP officers will continue to be involved nationally regarding the UASC schemes with a view to potentially supporting these vulnerable young people within Inverclyde in the future.
- 5.5 The second scheme, The Vulnerable Children's Scheme, is to support vulnerable children from the Middle East and North Africa who may be with their parents or other adult relatives or friends of the family. These children will have been impacted by the conflict and are deemed vulnerable and at risk by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- 5.6 As these children will be living within a family, there are no legal and financial issues, unlike the UASC scheme. The funding for the Vulnerable Children's Scheme mirrors the financial arrangements for the Syrian scheme. It is recommended that Inverclyde Council commences involvement in this scheme as part of the current refugee schemes.

## **6.0 NATIONAL ASYLUM SEEKER DISPERSAL SCHEME**

- 6.1 As previously reported to Committee, the Home Office has legal powers to force local authorities to accept asylum seekers into their area. These powers have never been used as the Home Office would prefer to see local authorities enter into a voluntary arrangement. Given that the Council is participating successfully in two refugee schemes and has developed a range of local support systems, the Home Office believes Inverclyde could participate in asylum dispersal.
- 6.2 Discussions with the Home Office, CoSLA and the accommodation contract holder, Serco, have taken place to look at the viability of Inverclyde becoming a dispersal area. The positives of becoming a dispersal area include the transformation of the demographic profile of the area, providing a young and growing population, and a boost to cultural diversity, creating a more cosmopolitan local authority area. The negatives would include the lack of funding available to local authorities and agencies to provide appropriate services, the procurement process for accommodation and the impact of both positive and negative asylum applications on the area and their knock on effect on services.
- 6.3 The Home Office usually works on a dispersal ratio of one asylum seeker per 200 local authority

populations. This would mean that Inverclyde, through normal dispersal methods, could have up to 380 asylum seekers; over 90% of whom may be young single males under the age of 25. However, by voluntarily participating, rather than the Home Office using their legal powers to disperse, officers have successfully negotiated that if Inverclyde volunteered, it would initially only take between 16 and 20 individuals, with a review after an agreed period of time. In addition, the Council would be able to deal directly with Serco, rather than their subcontractors, for the procurement of accommodation and also have the right to determine which areas/properties would be used for accommodation.

- 6.4 Asylum seekers receiving a positive decision on their asylum application and wishing to remain in the area could, potentially, have an impact on homelessness services. However, a bigger concern would be individuals whose application was refused and who were forced to leave their accommodation and were left with no support. The Council would be required to develop a range of policies and practices for staff to allow them to provide appropriate advice guidance and assistance to those vulnerable individuals who remained in the area. These policies should also be extended to other categories of vulnerable migrants in the area, particularly in light of continuing changes in social security legislation for foreign nationals.

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

### Finance

- 7.1 None at this stage.

#### Financial Implications:

##### One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

##### Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (if Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

### Legal

- 7.2 The Home Office have longstanding powers contained in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to force local authorities to become dispersal areas for asylum seekers. To date, these powers have never been used. However, the Home Office have indicated that if they fail to receive sufficient offers of help from local authorities, the powers will be used. There are now similar powers contained in the Immigration Act 2016 in relation to UASC, however, these will need affirmative resolution from Scottish Ministers before being enacted. Changes will also be required to child care legislation to allow UASC to be moved from local authorities in England to Scotland. The Immigration Act 2016 will be of particular interest to local authorities as it not only makes changes to immigration law and practice but also extends immigration control into other areas such as housing, social welfare and employment to tackle illegal immigration by making it harder to live and work in the UK without permission.

### Human Resources

7.3 No impact at this stage.

### **Equalities**

7.4 None at this time.

### **Repopulation**

7.5 Any participation in the schemes outlined will have a positive impact on the repopulation of the area.

## **8.0 CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 Consultation has taken place with the Council's community planning partners through the multiagency group which was established to oversee the integration of Afghan and Syrian refugees in the area. The group has been expanded and re-named to reflect its future role in relation to wider migration issues. Membership currently consists of staff from the Health and Social Care Partnership, Education Services, NHSGGC, Police, Registered Social Landlords, Department of Work and Pensions, Skills Development Scotland, Community Learning and Development. Information regarding future potential developments, as outlined in the report, has been shared and discussed with the group. Feedback has been universally positive, reflecting the good work already ongoing in the area.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 There are no specific background papers.