

Report To:	Health and Social Care Committee	Date:	8 June 2022
Report By:	Allen Stevenson Interim Chief Officer	Report No:	SW/27/2022/AH
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Subject:	CONTINGENCY ACCOMMODATION		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Health and Social Care Committee on the Home Office's plans to utilise a hotel within Inverclyde for the UK Government's asylum contingency dispersal, and the intention for widening dispersal across Scotland.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Scotland, with the exception of Glasgow, has not been involved in asylum dispersal. The demand for accommodation has increased over recent months due to a number of factors including Covid and increasing numbers seeking asylum, therefore contingency hotels are currently being utilised across the UK by the UK Government.
- 2.2 The Home Office has advised a hotel in Greenock will be commissioned by Mears, the UK Government's contracted provider, from the 23rd May 2022 to provide asylum contingency accommodation. Extensive work is now underway through the HSCP and wider partners including the 3rd sector to ensure appropriate support is in place.
- 2.3 In addition to the hotel contingency accommodation, the Home Office has advised they intend to widen dispersal across the UK including Scotland. Consultation events with the Home Office have commenced and plans for a regional based approach is developing. Phase one of this will involve the local authorities surrounding Glasgow (including Inverclyde) being utilised for wider dispersal.
- 2.4 A Strategic Oversight Group and an Operation Group have been established within Inverclyde to oversee both the contingency dispersal and the widening asylum dispersal. Learning from Glasgow will be crucial in developing processes for procurement of accommodation and provision of services going forward.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Health & Social Care Committee notes the use of a local hotel by the UK Government as contingency accommodation for people seeking asylum and note the ongoing planning and delivery of services to support this.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Health & Social Care Committee notes the intention by the Home Office to widen dispersal across the UK and Inverclyde to be in the 1st phase of this dispersal.
- 3.3 It is recommended that the Health & Social Care Committee notes the intention for the Council to respond to the Home Office consultation on widening dispersal, this being dealt with by the Interim Chief Officer of the HSCP under the Scheme of Delegation (Officers).

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Inverclyde has for a number of year worked with colleagues from the Home Office and CoSLA in the various resettlement schemes which has seen a number of families successfully resettled within the Inverclyde community.
- 4.2 Scotland, with the exception of Glasgow, has not been involved in asylum dispersal. Glasgow has for a number of years had a partnership with the Home Office and Mears, the UK Government's contracted provider, to accommodate people seeking asylum whilst waiting for the outcome of their application. The accommodation utilised is from a range of their providers including private and social landlords with appropriate governance procedures developed involving key partners to ensure appropriate housing procurement. Accommodation is managed by Mears and support provided by Migrant Help.
- 4.3 The demand for accommodation has increased over recent months due to a number of factors including Covid and increasing numbers seeking asylum therefore contingency hotels are currently being utilised across the UK and more recently across Scotland.

5.0 Hotel Accommodation

- 5.1 The Home Office and Mears have recently advised that they intend to utilise a hotel in Greenock as asylum contingency accommodation with men seeking asylum arriving in Greenock from late May 2022.
- 5.2 All meals, laundry and welfare support will be provided by Mears and Migrant Help. Feedback and learning from other areas has identified access to health services and access to activities as key therefore HSCP nursing staff have been identified to carry out health assessments and are currently shadowing Glasgow HSCP nursing colleagues who have developed a full range of assessments. Pathways for GP registration and mental health supports are also being developed.
- 5.3 Two Community Connectors have been identified from YourVoice to support the men to access a range of activities locally with YourVoice and CVS currently identifying access to ESOL provision; Laptops; gyms and the like. Wider community involvement may be required in the future.
- 5.4 An Asylum Dispersal Operational Group has been established and is meeting weekly, chaired by the Interim Chief Officer HSCP, involving a range of partners including Mears; Police Scotland; NHS colleagues and the 3rd sector.

6.0 Wider Dispersal

- 6.1 On the 13 April 2022 the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration announced that they would move to a full dispersal model with immediate effect, supported by funding for Local Authorities. To support this a range of informal and formal consultations have commenced to help develop future models of delivery. Within Scotland this is being coordinated through the Strategic Migration Partnership which is supported through CoSLA.

The consultation is not whether we agree with widening dispersal, rather it's to :

- **Agree** the full dispersal process;
- **Quantify** the impacts of asylum dispersal on local government
- **Inform** the build of a sustainable and flexible end-to-end asylum accommodation system
- **Establish** requirements to move to a "place based" immigration process

The consultation runs to the 1st July and an online survey response will be required from Inverclyde Council. CoSLA intend to submit their response to Leaders and will share across the Strategic Migration Partnership prior to submission to the Home Office.

- 6.2 Across Scotland, consultation events with the Home Office have commenced and plans for a regional based approach is developing. Phase one of this will involve the local authorities surrounding Glasgow (including Inverclyde) being utilised for wider dispersal.
- 6.3 As Glasgow has been a dispersal area for a number of years, learning and support is available and invitations have been extended by them for Inverclyde colleagues to attend various groups to better understand processes. Glasgow have established a Glasgow Partnership Group which meets every two weeks chaired by their HSCP Chief Officer. In addition they have a Housing Procurement Group which meets weekly where any property proposed for use by Mears is identified and discussed as to its suitability. The group involves Police Scotland, Housing Strategy colleagues and others.
- 6.4 Plans are underway to replicate Glasgow's Housing Procurement protocols within Inverclyde which will take into account the suitability of properties identified as potentially being utilised by Mears; landlord registration and the proximity to education and availability of services. A meeting with Mears to have early discussions regarding this took place on the 27th May and existing protocols used for accommodation procurement in Glasgow will be utilised.

7.0 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 7.1 In 2021 the UK government rolled out a mandatory National Transfer Scheme (NTS) in accordance with the Immigration Act 2016 to facilitate the safe transfer of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) across local authorities. Scottish local authorities, who had previously worked a voluntary transfer scheme were supported by COSLA in working towards a national rota weighting that allowed fair distribution across local authorities. Inverclyde's allocation is 1 young person per 45 transferring to Scotland this operated in cycles that are determined by the numbers of USAC entering the UK. Currently Inverclyde supports 5 UASC and a national funding agreement is in place to support this area of work.

8.0 Funding and Governance

- 8.1 There is no funding available to the Council for the hotel contingency dispersal. Costs will be accrued by the HSCP as additional nursing staff and the 3rd sector community connectors will require to be funded. In relation to the wider dispersal, the Home Office has identified one year funding of £3500 per 'bed space occupied' until the 31st March 2023. These costs have been identified based on figures Glasgow City had previously modelled. To support the implementation of a full dispersal model, as part of the consultation process, the Home Office has advised it is committed to undertaking a new burdens assessment. This will be an opportunity to better understand the costs associated with asylum dispersal and engage with the local government sector.
- 8.2 As stated previously an Operational Asylum Dispersal Group has been established. In addition, a Strategic Oversight Group chaired by the Chief Executive has also been established. The group will have oversight for all planned resettlement of people seeking asylum in Inverclyde and in addition for all resettlement schemes in Inverclyde including the New Scots Group.
- 8.3 As part of their induction, all elected members have been briefed on the Home Office plans for dispersal with further briefings to be scheduled as required.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

9.1

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	Other Comments
N/a					

In relation to the wider dispersal, the Home Office has identified one year funding of £3500 per bed space occupied until the 31st March 2023. These costs have been identified based on figures Glasgow City had previously modelled. To support the implementation of a full dispersal model, as part of the consultation process, the Home Office has advised it is committed to undertaking a new burdens assessment. This will be an opportunity to better understand the costs associated with asylum dispersal and engage with the local government sector. Subject to that additional funding being provided, all Council/HSCP activity to support this resettlement will be funded from existing resources.

9.2 **Legal**

The sharing of personal data from Mears to the Council/HSCP requires to be clarified and information is awaited from CoSLA as to whether a data sharing agreement requires to be in place.

Human Resources

9.3 There are no Human Resources issues within this report.

Equalities

9.4 Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES (see attached appendix)
√	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
x	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
x	NO

9.5 **Repopulation**

All of the steps undertaken by Officers seek to support the long-term interests of the Inverclyde economy and to provide a secure and safe environment for its workforce.

10.0 **CONSULTATION**

As part of their induction, all elected members have been briefed on the Home Office plans for dispersal with further briefings to be scheduled as required.

11.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

N/A