



Agenda Item 12

Resettlement of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Falkirk Council

Title: Resettlement of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Meeting: Executive
Date: 30 November 2021
Submitted By: Director of Corporate and Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report provides an update to Elected Members on the Council's participation in the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and the Scottish Government's 'Ending Destitution Together' strategy¹.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Executive is asked to: -

- 1) Agree that the current resettlement team become a permanent service**
- 2) Agree to continue participation in current and future resettlement schemes, subject to agreement**

3. Background

- 3.1. In January 2018, the Scottish Government launched the 'New Scots: Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022'². This aims to welcome and support refugees and asylum seekers resettling in Scotland, by delivering holistic services where Scotland:
- Is a place of safety for everyone, where people are able to live free from persecution as valued members of communities.
 - Enables everyone to pursue their ambitions through education, employment, culture and leisure activities.
 - Has strong, inclusive and resilient communities, where everyone is able to access the support and services they need and is able to exercise their rights.
 - Is a country that values diversity, where people are able to use and share their culture, skills and experiences, as they build strong relationships and connections.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-destitution-together/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/>

Refugee Resettlement Programmes

- 3.2. Since 2015, Scottish councils have played a leading role in the resettlement of refugees to the UK, with all 32 councils actively participating.
- 3.3. To date, over 3000 refugees have been resettled across Scotland under the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the associated Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). This greatly exceeded the initial commitment made by Scottish councils to resettle 2000 of the 20,000 people being resettled in the UK between 2015 and 2020. In Falkirk, we have resettled 12 families, a total of 56 people. A full breakdown is provided at Appendix A.
- 3.4. The new UK Resettlement Scheme has now replaced the VPRS & VCRS schemes. This scheme will have a global focus beyond the Middle East and North African region. It will support those who would most benefit from resettlement in the UK, which could include:
- those requiring urgent medical treatment;
 - survivors of violence and torture;
 - women and children at risk;
 - those living in formal refugee camps, informal settlements and host communities.

In addition, the Home Office may ask councils to assist in other ongoing refugee resettlement schemes, such as the recent Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

- 3.5. COSLA is now engaging with Scottish councils on their commitment to the resettlement programmes beyond 2022, and the end of the current VPRS & VCRS resettlement schemes.

4. Considerations

- 4.1. At present, the three key actions for this area of work are delivered by the Refugee Resettlement Team, who work with a range of internal and external partners to meet our objectives.
- 4.2. The Resettlement Team currently comprises of a Resettlement Officer and a Resettlement Support Worker, who are on temporary contracts until March 2022. It is proposed that these posts are embedded into the Housing & Communities Service staffing structure as permanent posts.
- 4.3. To meet the increased demands of the Scottish Government's Ending Destitution Strategy, additional staffing resources are required. It is proposed that the Team expands to include one temporary additional Support Worker as required

- 4.4. This expanded Resettlement Team will support the Ending Destitution Strategy, by supporting those resettling through the official UK Resettlement Scheme, and any future calls from the Home Office to assist in a global crisis. We have committed to resettling 15 individuals within 2021/22 and would anticipate continuing to support this scheme at this level in the future.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. If committee agrees the recommendations within this paper, then the local community will be further consulted to determine their contribution to the Ending Destitution Strategy, and further community involvement with refugee resettlement schemes.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1. The Council receives a budget from the Home Office for each individual through the UKRS arrangements. Depending on the scheme, the length of time the individual can be supported varies; this can be from 1-5 years.

Additional funding is paid to cover school education costs. There is also funding which the Council can apply for to cover excess English language training for adults.

NHS Forth Valley is paid separately by the Home Office to cover additional health costs.

Staff and overhead costs incurred in running the resettlement schemes in Falkirk are met through the funding from the Home Office. This is a decreasing term for between one to five years, therefore, funds remain available dependant on our ongoing participation in the scheme and quotas that we have agreed.

In terms of the ongoing financial burden should the Home Office Grant funding cease, should Falkirk Council continue to accept refugees staffing costs of around £87,000 per annum would be required from an even split between the Housing Revenue Account and the Housing General Fund.

Resources

- 6.2. We know that from our work in this area since 2016, there is a significant amount of work required in preparation for arrivals and ongoing support for resettled refugees. There is a need for support services, beyond which we would normally provide, to ensure that cultural differences are addressed.

Lack of such support in the past has led to issues for people settling in Scotland.

In order to maintain continuity for service users, and maintain the wealth of experience that the team has developed, it is proposed that the existing Resettlement Officer posts are made permanent, to ensure service continuity beyond 2022.

Legal

- 6.3. Refugees on the scheme are entitled to five years leave to remain. They are entitled to access all statutory health, care and education services as if they were UK nationals during this time. They are also entitled to work and claim benefits, including child benefit, tax credit, Universal Credit, etc. At the end of the five years, they can apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK. If this is not granted to the person, it would be in Falkirk Councils interest to assist them to leave the UK, or appeal the decision, otherwise they would have No Recourse to Public Funds.

Risk

- 6.4. There is a potential risk that Home Office funding may stop. While this is unlikely, we would have no influence over this decision.

Equalities

- 6.5. No Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for the information contained within this report, as the Resettlement Scheme arrangements are outwith the control of the Council.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.6. To support sustainability and the environmental impact, we will ensure that our new residents are aware of recycling, caring for the environment and energy efficiency. Our previous families have been involved in several community environment projects, and we will continue to consider this moving forward. We also rely on second-hand goods to furnish properties for families before their arrival. This ensure that we divert goods from landfill.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1. The UK Government has made a commitment to support and safeguard vulnerable people who seek protection in the UK through resettlement and asylum routes and the Scottish Government has committed to supporting New Scots. The people participating in resettlement schemes are reliant on the support of local authorities to support their needs. It is recommended that Falkirk Council embeds its commitment to providing safe and inclusive communities through participation in the refugee resettlement schemes and recognises the valuable impact the Resettlement Team has on their lives.

Director of Corporate & Housing Services

Author – Joanna Stewart, Housing Support Co-ordinator,
joanna.stewart@falkirk.gov.uk

Date: 15 November 2021

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#)
- [Ending Destitution Together: Strategy](#)
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Appendices

Appendix A

Current Status of Resettled VPR Families in Falkirk

- As of August 2021, Falkirk has resettled thirteen families with family sizes ranging from families of four to six.
- In total, Falkirk has resettled twenty-eight adults and thirty-three children.
- One family relocated to Edinburgh and one individual has moved to Glasgow.
- All families were resettled under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.
- Of the 28 adults:
 - 2 are in full-time employment
 - 5 are in part-time employment
 - 2 individuals are retired
 - 3 are attending Forth Valley College full time
 - 11 are attending Forth Valley College part time
 - 1 person has successfully completed an Access Course at Stirling University
 - 1 person has been offered a place at Strathclyde University
 - All who wish to are attending classes for English for Speakers of Other Languages
 - 6 individuals have obtained a Forklift Truck license
 - 2 individuals have attained a CSCS (labourers permit)
 - 5 individuals are currently engaging with the Employment Training Unit to get ready for work
 - 6 people have passed their UK driving test
- 11 Adults have participated in various opportunities for volunteering including:
 - Salvation Army
 - CSREC
 - Re-Act , Refugee Action Scotland
 - Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre
 - The Conservation Volunteers
 - Falkirk Re Union Canal Boats
 - Forth Valley Sensory Centre
 - Falkirk Library
 - Forth Valley Hospital
- We have
 - 9 children in High School
 - 17 children in Primary School
 - 5 children in Nursery
- One child previously volunteered with Police Youth Scotland Volunteers.
- Other Activities

- 3 individuals created a Digital Story, one of which was screened at an event at the Bo'ness Hippodrome in August 2019 as part of The People's Story project in Scotland.
- 8 Ladies have completed an Inspiring Women Course
- 1 individual has graduated from Canal College
- 1 individual has participated in the creation of a Community Garden with his neighbours at in which he now grows fruit and vegetables – featured in Tenant Talk
- 2 families participated in a residential Community Learning Development trip to Fordell Firs
- We were successful in a bid for funding for the 2021 Get Into Summer project, which allowed us to purchase Historic Scotland Memberships for our families and a trip to Edinburgh Zoo.
- We are currently in the process of setting up a partnership project with Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils to pilot a bespoke college course