

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Youth, Equalities and Empowerment Committee

approval noting

Ref LMcM/JS

Date 13/12/2018

Syrian Resettlement Programme Progress Update

From Head of Communities

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Executive Summary

This report outlines progress with the Syrian Resettlement Programme to date and sets out proposals for the fourth phase of arrivals scheduled for 2019. The report also explores future resettlement arrangements yet to be agreed by the UK and Scottish Governments.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) note the content of the report; and
 - (ii) agree to receive further updates at future meetings of the Youth, Equalities and Empowerment Committee
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Supporting Documents

Council plan to 2020

The Syrian Resettlement Programme supports the following actions outlined in the Council's Plan.

- Action 2 – Understand the differing needs of communities and take action to reduce economic inequality.
- Action 4 – Promote and provide supported options to reduce unemployment and underemployment.
- Action 7 – Fully engage with, children and young people their parents and families to enable children to reach their full potential.
- Action 12– Support those most in need to improve outcomes for all our citizens through good data analysis.

1. Background

Since its inception in September 2015 North Lanarkshire has welcomed 133 Syrian refugees through the Syrian Resettlement Programme and all have settled well across all six localities in the area.

In June 2018 the Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) agreed to implement minor review findings of the support model and agreed to create a post to oversee the support being delivered across the locality to ensure quality standards are maintained and to ensure consistency of approach.

The group also agreed to set aside the 'Family Reunification' approach to the fourth and final arrivals group due to extreme difficulties experienced in dealing with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and lack of progress. As this course of action was likely to have implications for the overall number this matter was referred to the Council's Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

The UK Government's managed resettlement programme involving Syrian refugees comes to an end in early 2020 with the final arrivals needing to be identified and agreed by December 1919. COSLA and its partners' thoughts are now turning to what future programmes might involve after that date.

2. Report

2.1 Performance Indicators

Performance continues to be good in all areas and across all the indicators. Progress made since the last meeting of the MOWG in June includes the following:-

- **Education** – some of the individuals who had gone on to further education have felt it necessary to take a step back due to struggles with language as the academic level got higher. They are being offered additional support through the colleges and local ESOL classes with a view to returning to FE when it is appropriate.
- The approach to ESOL is continuing to develop with groups not only taking part in classroom learning with their peers. Some individuals have graduated to wider learning in mixed classes and the team have provided alternative ways to learn English including excursions and residential learning. The Wishaw group also visited the Scottish Parliament and were warmly received by the First Minister and given the opportunity to tour the building and ask questions.
- **Social Connections** – looking ahead to the fourth group arrival colleagues in VANL are looking to re-energise the voluntary effort and look for new volunteers who are keen to support the group. The chair of Fresh Start NL has unfortunately resigned as a result of leaving the area. However the team are working with Scottish Refugee Council and other advisors to examine whether support to develop this group may be found through existing organisations based in Glasgow.

2.2 Fourth Arrivals Group

The Council's Policy and Resources Committee agreed on 27th September 2018 to the proposal to move away from attempting to take family reunification cases because of the difficulties involved and the UNHCR position/criteria which makes it virtually impossible to allow extended family of our existing group to access the programme and to revert to taking nominations from the UNHCR priority list.

As a result of this P&R decision, the process has begun to identify suitable accommodation (10-12 houses) in the Bellshill and Cumbernauld areas. The reason for this is that, in other areas, the Tower Reprovisioning Programme is adding pressure to Housing waiting lists. As previously, colleagues from Housing Associations are being invited to participate.

Once a property is identified details are shared with COSLA and the Home Office who work with UNHCR to match families to the size and type of property. The void property is then held until the respective family arrives. Void, repair and furnishing costs are met by Home Office funding and once a family is matched and formally accepted it normally takes about 8 weeks to make the travel arrangements. It is therefore anticipated that the first families in this group will begin to arrive in March 2019. The plan is to try and receive the 10-12 families one or two at a time as logistically it is much easier to arrange.

An appointment has now been made to a dedicated Social Worker post. This post will provide welcome support to the teams working with the families on a daily basis as that individual's main task will be to provide guidance, reassurance and consistency of approach.

2.3 Refugee Resettlement 2020 and beyond

Dialogue is about to begin on what refugee resettlement will look like after April 2020 when the Syrian Resettlement Programme comes to an end. COSLA has established a new Strategic Migration Partnership involving senior individuals from key organisations such as UK and Scottish Governments, Home Office, SOLACE, SRC and others and are scheduled to open the discussions on this in early 2019. The Council and North Lanarkshire Partnership will make a contribution to this debate and serious decisions will need to be taken. A further update on this will be reported to a future meeting as the debate develops.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland

The previous Equality Impact Assessment has been reviewed in light of the new Equality and Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment as the Syrian Resettlement Programme is a significant Council Policy.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

The assessment recognises the vulnerable nature of the Syrian refugees. The programme of support has been established in line with the initial assessment which is subject to review and amendment throughout the timespan of the programme.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

All costs covered by grant funding from UK Home Office for five years

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

Impact on Housing Allocations Policy

4.3 Environmental Impact

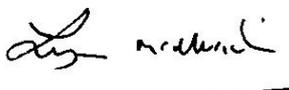
None anticipated

4.4 Risk Impact

Impact on Housing Allocations Policy is assessed on an ongoing basis.

5. Measures of success

Syrian Refugees integrate successfully into local communities



Lizanne McMurrich
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