

Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee

10am, Tuesday 10 May, 2016

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

Item number	7.4
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive Summary

This report provides an update to Committee on refugee resettlement work in the city.

Links

Coalition Pledges	P36
Council Priorities	
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 , SO2 , SO3 , SO4

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee:
 - 1.1.1 note progress on resettling refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in the city since November 2015.
 - 1.1.2 note that planning for future arrivals has started.
 - 1.1.3 agree extension of the city's involvement in the SVPRS with a view to resettling similar numbers of refugees in each of the remaining four years of the scheme.
 - 1.1.4 note discussions are underway on involvement in additional refugee resettlement schemes and that detailed proposals will be reported to committee for consideration.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) – now renamed the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) – is a UK Government programme through which twenty thousand Syrian refugees will be resettled in the UK over the life of the current Parliament.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 22 September 2016, Committee agreed to resettle in the region of one hundred refugees in the first year of Edinburgh's participation in the scheme.
- 2.3 Either directly, or via COSLA, the Council has subsequently been approached to consider involvement in other refugee resettlement schemes.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The first refugees under the SRP arrived in Edinburgh on 17 November 2015. There are now fifteen SRP families, comprising 58 individuals, residing in the city. Project management and coordination rests with the Council and a broad programme has been developed to support families' resettlement and integration.
- 3.2 Homes have been provided through the Council's pre-existing private sector leasing scheme run in collaboration with Link Housing. Families are being supported in their tenancies by Link Housing Officers.

- 3.3 Families with children of school age were acquainted with their local school during December, with all children taking up full-time places at the beginning of January had they not already done so. Links are currently being made with the city's universities and colleges to explore options both for young people leaving school and adults wishing to start, continue or conclude higher education courses.
- 3.4 English language teaching is being delivered through a partnership between the City of Edinburgh Council (co-ordination and some teaching), the Welcoming (language teaching and cultural integration), Saheliya (women-specific language teaching, cultural integration and counselling) and Edinburgh College (assessment and advanced teaching). The Welcoming has also included a significant element of home energy efficiency and environmental awareness as part of its cultural integration programme.
- 3.5 Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues working from St Andrew Square are providing employability support with all lead claimants linked to a dedicated Work Coach. All eligible claimants are in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance or Employment Support Allowance, whichever is the more appropriate.
- 3.6 Revenues and Benefits colleagues have been working closely with the DWP to ensure families are in receipt of any other appropriate benefits.
- 3.7 Early steps were taken to bring the new arrivals together with the existing Syrian diaspora in the city. This has assisted greatly in the development of social links. Generally, the resettlement project has benefitted hugely from the involvement of a number of city-based organisations, including Edinburgh Churches for Sanctuary, Re-Act, FreshStart, Central Mosque and a range of churches, other faith groups and private individuals.
- 3.8 Core partners' perspective is that the first phase of resettlement has largely gone well. This is borne out by anecdotal feedback from the new arrivals themselves, which we are taking steps to gather more formally. This feedback will be used to inform and improve our response to the next set of arrivals, and we are aiming in particular to improve our links to and coordination with the third sector and wider civic society.
- 3.9 Planning has now started to bring the remainder of the first year total to the city. Potential properties for the next cohort have been identified. Discussions as to the exact timing of arrival are ongoing with the Home Office, however, the intention is to schedule the remaining arrivals over the course of the summer.
- 3.10 As planning for the arrival of the remainder of our first year's commitment commences, the Home Office is interested to know our intentions for future years. The core project team considers the numbers and frequency of arrivals this year to be sustainable, and if members are so minded, would be happy to plan on this basis for future years of the scheme.
- 3.11 In addition to involvement in the scheme, the Council has been approached directly by the Home Office to become an asylum dispersal centre, and via COSLA to consider contributing to the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum seeking

children. Conversations on both proposals are at a very early, fact-finding stage, but the aim is to bring detailed proposals to Committee for discussion within the next cycle.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The key measure of success will be that the number of refugees envisaged relocate to Edinburgh and feel they have integrated successfully into the city in terms of their home, social and professional/educational lives.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 Funding for refugees arriving under the scheme is provided by the Home Office on a tariff basis. The tariff is set at different levels depending on the individual refugee's age and needs. The funding principle is that local authorities participating in the scheme should not be out of pocket and the level of funding is consistent with this.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to foster good relations between different groups. Any risks in this regard will be mitigated through careful project coordination with Community Safety, Police Scotland and third sector colleagues as well as development of proactive and reactive media strategies.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 The recommendations and contents of this report have been assessed in light of the public sector equality duty described within the Equality Act 2010 and the various human rights duties placed on the Council. Initial assessment has indicated that participation in this scheme is in line with the Council's obligations. Careful consideration will need to be given to ensuring good community relations are maintained, and any illegal discrimination, harassment or victimisation of relocated persons are addressed.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered. Relevant Council sustainable development policies have been taken into account.

8.2 The proposal in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because it promotes personal well being and social inclusion, and creates equality of opportunity for the most vulnerable in our society.

9. Consultation and engagement

9.1 Consultation and engagement continue to take place with statutory and third sector partners to enhance successful delivery of the scheme.

10. Background reading/external references

[Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme](#): Report to Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee, 22 September 2015

[Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme](#): Report to Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee, 5 May 2015

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11. Links

Coalition Pledges	P36 - Develop improved partnership working across the Capital and with the voluntary sector to build on the “Total Craigroyston” model
Council Priorities	
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 - Edinburgh's Economy Delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all
	SO2 - Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health
	SO3 - Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential

Appendices

SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric

None