



Report Reference Number: E/19/44

To: Executive
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Status: Non Key Decision
Ward(s) Affected: ALL
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Title: North Yorkshire Refugee Resettlement (including Selby District Councils' participation)

Summary: The number of refugees worldwide is calculated to be at its highest ever, standing at 25.9 million. Consequently, in June 2019, the Home Secretary wrote to Parliament to reaffirm Government commitment to the resettlement of refugees beyond the conclusion of the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), due to conclude in 2020. A letter outlining these details has been sent to Council Leaders, to seek participation in the new scheme, attached in Appendix A. Further details about the new scheme (provisionally called the 'Global Resettlement Scheme') are also attached in Appendix B.

Specifically for the Selby district, provisional numbers indicate that participation in the new scheme would require a commitment to resettling approximately 29 refugees in total, between the period 2020/21 and 2023/24.

Recommendations: To approve Selby District Council's participation in the new 'Global Resettlement Scheme' and to commit to resettling a minimum of 29 persons between 2020/21 and 2023/24.

Reasons for recommendation:

To enable Selby District Council to participate in the wider North Yorkshire resettlement scheme and commit to supporting the resettlement of refugees.

1 Introduction and background

Previous scheme: North Yorkshire

- 1.1** As part of the previous resettlement programme, North Yorkshire authorities agreed to resettle a total of 219 refugees, with each district pledging a minimum commitment based upon North Yorkshire (as a whole) taking 1% of the country's total quota. North Yorkshire began accepting refugees in July 2016 and finished in February 2018, as shown in Appendix C. The actual number of refugees resettled in North Yorkshire in this period was 238 in total (209 SVPs and 29 VCRS across 50 families). Families were typically two adults and three children (most of the children were primary school aged).
- 1.2** Since this time, seven families (34 persons) have since left North Yorkshire; the main reason being to live nearer to relatives resettled elsewhere in the UK. The nationalities of the VCRS families resettled in North Yorkshire were Sudanese and Iraqi.

Previous scheme: Selby

- 1.3** Seven refugee families (32 persons) were resettled in the Selby district between July 2016 and July 2017, using seven properties. No families have since left the district, but there has been one house move within the district.
- 1.4** The progress of the adults in attaining a reasonable understanding of the English language has generally been slow (reflecting the case overall in the county). As of September 2019, one adult is in employment and a further three adults have had work experience, with one being offered employment. Two other adults are carers. A number of the remaining adults of working-age are volunteering and are being supported to get into employment.
- 1.5** Local volunteers have helped befriend the families and assisted with their language development alongside the more formal English language classes provided. With assistance from the Refugee Council, volunteers have also assisted the families with building their independence and encouraging their participation in the wider community.

New scheme

- 1.6** The new 'Global Resettlement Scheme' will incorporate all current resettlement programmes (SRP, VCRS and Gateway Protection Programme) into one, summarised below:
- In 2020/21, the government will aim to resettle 5,000 refugees. The grant provided to local authorities for arrivals will be funded at the current rate and for the same period as the current schemes (five years for local authorities).
 - The government has not confirmed the funding for arrivals after the year 2020/21 as they are awaiting the outcome of a comprehensive spending review. However, they have declared an intention to run the new programme long-term. Consequently the scheme is not to be seen as a one year extension to the existing resettlement programmes, but rather a permanent consolidation into one scheme.

- The numbers of refugees to be resettled on a yearly basis beyond 2020/21 is thought unlikely to change significantly and the funding expected to remain the same (though it is not yet known whether inflationary cost pressures will be taken into account in subsequent years). The process for accepting refugees will also be the same as under the previous scheme, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) making recommendations to the Home Office, and the final decision resting with local authorities.
- The geographical focus will however be broadened beyond the Middle East and North African region. There will also be a new process for emergency resettlement, allowing the UK to respond quickly to instances where lives are at risk. The number of refugees expected to be brought to the UK under this process will remain a minor part of the overall number.

1.7 In the Yorkshire and Humber region, the regional partnership agreement between Migration Yorkshire and relevant local authorities is likely to remain the same under the new scheme. The Refugee Council will continue to provide integration support in 2020/21, as planned. However, a procurement exercise is expected to take place at the same time to appoint an integration support provider for the longer term. This exercise will also provide an opportunity to re-model the existing integration support if required.

2 The Report: Participation in the ‘Global Resettlement Scheme’

Things to consider

- 2.1** All North Yorkshire district councils will need to consider participation in the new scheme via their formal decision-making process. Informal discussions indicate that, in principle, North Yorkshire County Council will participate in the Global Resettlement Scheme provided that:
- This is in partnership with North Yorkshire district councils;
 - The funding is no lower than envisaged by the Home Office;
 - All arrangements are similar to the SVP and VCRS programmes; and families are resettled on a phased basis across districts as happened on the SVP and VCRs programmes.
- 2.2** Selby District Council would be responsible for identifying suitable properties to be used for resettlement. The flexibility to use a range of housing types will enable the officers to identify the most suitable property available at the time of resettlement. When determining the suitability of a property consideration would be given to demand for housing, availability, the needs of the family and the suitability of the area. It is recommended that all housing tenure options are considered and we would aim to work with Housing Associations and private sector landlords to identify suitable properties in addition to council owned housing.
- 2.3** There have been issues with the use of privately rented property in resettling refugees around the country; due to affordability issues, adaption requirements, and finding private landlords willing to accept families on welfare benefits. Selby District Council chose to use council owned accommodation for the previous

resettlement scheme and this worked well. In other areas the predominant use of private rented accommodation was seen to slow down the speed of resettlement significantly, in regards to numbers of families being accepted from each flight. It has also become apparent that families in private rented accommodation are more likely to have to move after their initial 12 months, resulting in additional costs and upheaval for the families concerned.

- 2.4** Future arrivals would need to be resettled in towns to ensure they have access to the appropriate support services. Ideally, it is suggested that new arrivals are resettled in the same town as existing refugee families to help consolidate a support network between families and possibly improve retention rates.
- 2.5** The schedule of arrivals across each of the seven North Yorkshire districts has yet to be confirmed but will begin with resettling families in no more than three districts at a time. Resettlement would take place over the space of several months, before moving on to the remaining districts. For practical reasons, it is advised that districts do not look to spread out resettlement of families across the years 2020/21 to 2023/24, as this would be more difficult to manage and require a greater level of resource on an ongoing basis.
- 2.6** Careful consideration would also need to take place in regards to the country and cultural background of refugees being resettled in relation to existing immigrant communities. Experience has shown that resettling only one family from a separate cultural background to other refugee families heightens the risk of that family moving out of the county.
- 2.7** It is currently being suggested that, should there be agreement for some or all North Yorkshire local authorities to participate in the Global Resettlement Scheme, it should proceed on the basis that participation will be a longer term commitment than 2020/21. Locally, a four year commitment would be needed for planning purposes. A review could then be taken towards the end of that period regarding future participation in the scheme.

Indicative numbers:

- 2.8** Under the current scheme, North Yorkshire districts resettled an average of 150 persons each year from July 2016 to February 2018. However, due to pressures on local housing, noting also the duties introduced under The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, a more conservative target of 50 refugees per year (approximately 11-13 families) are proposed to be resettled under the new scheme.
- 2.9** 50 persons per year from 2020/21 to 2023/24 would equate to 1% of the envisaged national programme, providing the same 'fair share' approach used for the SVP and VCRS programmes (given that North Yorkshire's population is just under 1% of the UK's population). The number of refugees that would be resettled in each district under this programme is shown below:

District	2018 population mid-year estimate by district	Percentage of North Yorkshire population by	Refugees to be resettled in total 2020/21 to

		district	2023/24
Craven	56,832	9.3	19
Hambleton	91,134	14.8	30
Harrogate	160,533	26.1	52
Richmondshire	53,244	8.7	17
Ryedale	54,920	8.9	18
Scarborough	108,736	17.7	35
Selby	89,106	14.5	29
Total	614,505	100	200

2.10 To achieve an average resettlement rate of 50 persons per year, a minimum of two to three districts a year would need to participate in the scheme. The actual numbers resettled might be marginally higher than those listed due to the need to match family sizes to specific properties.

2.11 Finally, each district council would need to arrange to provide the required supply of housing during their allocated time period. The schedule of charter flights is likely to be known some time in advance of the families arriving, providing an opportunity for Officers to arrange availability of their own accommodation, or to have early discussions with national, regional and local housing providers to secure their commitment to the project.

Positive reasons for participating in the new refugee resettlement scheme:

2.12 On the whole, North Yorkshire's previous resettlement programme has progressed smoothly and families have settled in relatively well considering their past traumatic lives.

2.13 There has been a good spirit of partnership working between the local authorities in North Yorkshire, the Refugee Council and other resettlement partners (such as Health and the Police). This would need to continue in order to ensure that the refugee resettlement for later arrivals was a success.

2.14 The current level of funding provided by the Home Office to local authorities is sufficient to provide appropriate levels of support to the refugee families resettled in North Yorkshire.

3 Alternative Options Considered

The option not to participate in the scheme was considered. Even though participation in the scheme is voluntary, non-participation would be at odds with wider national, regional and countywide commitments.

4 Implications

4.1 Legal Implications

This report seeks agreement to renew a partnership agreement between the Council the other districts, NYCC and Migration Yorkshire. That agreement shall set out the obligations of different parties.

4.2 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications for the Council. Costs associated with the resettlement of refugees are met by government grant. NYCC are responsible for the receipt and spending of grant monies, including the payment of eligible housing costs to the Council.

The proposed scheme does however have indirect cost implications and these include the staff time required preceding resettlement to source and prepare the accommodation. This cost is ineligible for grant payment and would be absorbed within existing staffing levels and workloads.

The government has not been able to confirm the funding for arrivals after 2020/21 due to needing to await the outcome of the comprehensive spending review but they have declared their intention to run the new programme in the long term. It is important to note that participation by NYCC (and the districts) is subject to on-going funding from Government at the same levels as the previous Syrian Resettlement Programme

4.3 Policy Implications

The North Yorkshire Home Choice Policy sets out how we allocate our Housing and although any allocation made to support the refugee programme would be made within Policy, this would have an impact on the supply of social and affordable housing available to other applicants with a housing need in the district.

In the period October 2018 to 2019 the Council re-let 60 3 bedroom properties across the district and of these 15 went to applicants with gold banding, 21 silver and 24 bronze. Applicants who have been awarded Gold or Silver banding are considered to be in housing need and those with a bronze banding, are adequately housed. Hence the Council does have sufficient suitable housing to accommodate the refugees, although there may be an impact on applicants with a local connection, but who do not have a priority banding.

5 Conclusion

The report proposes that Selby District Council commits to working in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council to support the delivery of the sub-regional 'Global Resettlement Scheme'.

6 Appendices

- Appendix A - Letter to Council Leaders, dated 17 June 2019, from the Rt. Hon. Caroline Nokes MP (Minister of State for Immigration: Home Office); and Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Minister for Faith: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government).

- Appendix B - UK Resettlement Scheme: Note for Local Authorities, August 2015 (Home Office).
- Appendix C - North Yorkshire Refugee Resettlement Schedule: July 2016 to February 2018.

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