

APPENDIX 1

OFFICER DECISION RECORD 1 FORM

This form should be used to record Officer Decisions in Excess of £100k (but below the key decision threshold), or where required by Financial, Contract or other Procedure Rules or following formal delegation from Cabinet or a Cabinet Member or a Council Committee.

Decision Reference No: AHWB.036.2021 Afghan Relocations and Assistance

BOX 1

DIRECTORATE: Adults, Health & Well-Being

DATE: 10/07/2021

Contact Name: Joanne Evans

Tel. No.: 01302 737729

Subject Matter: Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

BOX 2

DECISION TAKEN

To extend the partnership arrangements in place with Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire), who act as the accountable body and administer the funding, to support the resettlement of up to 3 Afghan family units within Doncaster over a 12 month period as part of the Home Office's Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

To approve receipt of funding circa £104k as part of the funding arrangement.

BOX 3

REASON FOR THE DECISION

As British and US Forces are leaving Afghanistan the situation for the Afghan nationals that were employed, mainly as Interpreters, has become dangerous, with them being at increased risk. In December 2020, due to the deteriorating security situation in the country, the Government announced the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This is a new scheme that offers relocation or other assistance to current and former Locally Employed Staff, and their families, in Afghanistan to reflect the changing situation.

Under the new scheme, those current, or former, Locally Employed Staff, assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life, are being offered priority relocation to the UK, regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. It is estimated that this will involve around 4000 Afghan nationals. They will receive a 5 year visa which includes the right to work, social housing and free access to Health services; they will apply for Habitual Residency status on arrival.

As with the initial Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme (SRRP), the Home Office has expressed a preference for a regionalised approach to ensure strategic coordination and, in Yorkshire and Humber, the regional programme will continue to be coordinated by Migration Yorkshire (part of Leeds City Council). The ARAP project will be funded by the Government via Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and the implications for Doncaster are that the scheme should be cost neutral for the Authority.

In May 2021, the Home Office, through Migration Yorkshire, asked Local Authorities to support the voluntary scheme and welcome families and individuals into their communities. Doncaster has volunteered to take 3 families, likely to total around 15 individuals. The initial dates for families to arrive were confirmed within August, however due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan this has been brought forward with the first tranche of families coming into the UK having already arrived in Calderdale and Leeds and undertaking the required Covid19 isolation period.

The first family due to arrive within Doncaster is now scheduled for the 26th of July with the remaining 2 families following at intervals within August. Accommodation has been located and confirmed via St Leger Homes, one within Balby and the remaining two within Bentley. An element of the funding, supplied through the scheme, is to establish these properties as homes which is currently underway in regards to furnishings, household goods and day to day equipment.

Integration support will be provided by the Refugee Council as with our other resettlement schemes. It has been confirmed that due to the nature of the work undertaken for the British Forces, the lead adult will have English language skills which will support their longer term integration, albeit the wider family will need additional support via ESOL and within schools.

As part of the ARAP programme arrangements are already in place for the children of the first family through Learning and Opportunities colleagues regarding school placements and language

support in school in line with normal placement processes and this will be the case for all subsequent families. Within school settings the expectation is for the use of existing funding allocated to support the provision such as the Pupil Premium. Wider ESOL provision for additional adults in the family or to support gaps in provision is to be arranged by the Refugee Council and the Local Authority as required.

Although the confirmed funding arrangements are still to be received, the proposed funding guidance has been issued, as seen in Table 1 below, which outlines the ARAP Scheme will run in the same way as the UK Resettlement Scheme (previously Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme) and will be paid in 3 payments. It is likely that 40% of the funding will be available to be claimed on arrival in Doncaster, a further 30% at the end of month 4 and the final 30% at the end of month 8. However, the final arrangements are expected to be confirmed and shared with Local Authorities' week commencing the 19th July 2021.

The Scheme aims to fund costs in a similar way to the existing UK Resettlement Scheme, with the exception of school education and health costs which are expected to be met by School establishments via their existing funding, and health costs via the Health service directly.

The majority of the funding from the Home Office will be in place for 12 months with the funding the Council receives being used to establish the family homes and providing what is needed to support their integration into the wider community.

The families will receive a weekly allowance, paid by the Refugee Council, which ends once they qualify for benefits or they become employed or up to 4 months, which they will be supported to do. In addition the rent payments allocated to each individual will also run for 4 months. However, due to the support that will be provided and the professional level the lead adult will have due to their previous roles in Afghanistan, it is anticipated that employment or benefit entitlement will be sorted within that time period which will support ongoing rent payments.

It is currently outlined that the Refugee Council will charge around £3500 per person for integration, although Migration Yorkshire are continuing to discuss this amount as it is a higher amount that has been previously seen in other resettlement schemes.

The current funding information we have received is provided below in more detail;

Table 1

The table below sets out the expected funding and the recipient

Item	Length of support	Amount per person	Recipient
Rent	4 months	Up to £15 per person per week	Doncaster Council

Set up costs & ongoing support	12 months	£6500 per person	Doncaster Council
ESOL	12 months	£850 per adult needing support	Doncaster Council
Integration support	12 months	£3500 per person	Refugee Council
Cash support until benefits can be claimed per week	4 months	Single <25 - £59.20 Single >25 - £74.70 Couples - £117.40 Child < 18 – 37.75	Family

Table 2

This table sets out what the funding within Table 1 translates into for the first family, which is made up of 5 individuals (2 adults, 3 children):

	Unit Cost	People	Total	Recipient
Rent (4 months support)	£15.00	5	£1,300.00	Doncaster Council
Set up costs and ongoing support (12 months support)	£6,500.00	5	£32,500.00	Doncaster Council
ESOL (12 months support)	£850.00	1	£850.00	Doncaster Council
Integration support (12 months support)	£3,500.00	5	£17,500.00	Refugee Council
Cash Support (Weekly) – Adults	£117.40	2	£234.80	Family
Cash Support (Weekly) – Children	£37.75	3	£113.25	Family

We are aware that the further 2 families will also consist of 5 individuals in each and therefore funding amounts should be at similar levels meaning Doncaster Council would be expected to receive around £103,950.00 in total through the scheme. The payment schedule has been included above.

A Multi-agency Officers group has been formed with representation from the Communities Team, Public Health, Learning and Opportunities - School Admissions and Virtual School Language Support and St Leger Homes. This group acts to evaluate and review the family information to ensure a match to the accommodation and understand identified needs and local capacity to support the families on their arrival. The group will continue to meet once all families arrive in Doncaster to ensure support is appropriate to enable integration into the community and support independence longer term.

BOX 4

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Non-participation within the voluntary scheme has been considered, but is not the preferred option as it would not be a humanitarian response and it would mean that Doncaster might be the only major town in Yorkshire and Humber not to participate.

As Doncaster has experience of accepting families on resettlement/relocation schemes, the measures to be taken to ensure the appropriate arrangements are in place prior to arrival, the ongoing support that will be required for the family once they are settled and the lines of responsibility between the Council, SLHD, Refugee Council and Migration Yorkshire are clear and in place.

Following the Home Office's direct correspondence to the Chief Executive, both he and the Mayor, alongside Executive Board and Directors have pledged their support to the scheme for the number of families specified above.

Participation in the scheme is therefore recommended as the preferred option for managing the process and ensuring there is a positive outcome for the families.

BOX 5

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Participation in this scheme is voluntary and not part of a statutory duty on the Council, there are no direct legal implications. Further Legal advice will be provided on the specific details of any agreement to be entered into with the Home Officer as part of this scheme.

Name: Neil Concannon Signature: NC Date: 22/7/21

Signature of Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services (or representative)

BOX 6

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Home Office will allocate funding in exchange for housing 3 Afghan families and providing integration services as part of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

The Afghan relocations and assistance policy allows for 12 months support from their arrival date in the UK. Councils will receive £3,500 per individual and additional set up costs and support. The proposed funding guidance has been issued, as seen in Table 1 below and there will be 3 payments. It is likely that 40% of the funding will be available to be claimed on arrival in Doncaster, a further 30% at the end of month 4 and the final 30% at the end of month 8. It is estimated that Doncaster Council would be expected to receive circa £104k in total through the scheme.

The funding should only be used to achieve delivery of this scheme outcomes detailed in the report above. It is expected to cover Local Authority lead costs, housing (void, decoration,

furnishing, adaptations), caseworker(s), interpreters, adult and children's social care needs, accredited ESOL course.

Leeds City Council has agreed to receive the grant and be the accountable body on behalf of itself and Doncaster Council. There will be an Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) partnership agreement between Leeds City Council and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, which covers the funding, obligations, monitoring arrangements, outcomes, payment terms etc.

Doncaster Council will need to ensure sufficient monitoring processes are in place to ensure they can provide accurate and timely information required by Leeds City Council as acting accountable body.

This ODR is looking for approval to accept the funding as per financial regulations E.9 Directors are authorised to apply for external funding, in consultation with the CFO, which contribute to the delivery of Council services or achievement of Council goals. Grant acceptance and/or commitment is subject to key decision rules.

Name: Cheryl Slade Signature:  Date: 26.07.21

Signature of Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director of Finance (or representative)

BOX 7

OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS

Due to the escalating security problems, the Government is now evacuating all former Locally Employed Staff to the UK regardless of whether they have been accepted into a Local Authority, with cases being matched to Local Authorities upon arrival. All arrival families on the ARAP scheme, on leaving quarantine, will now be placed in 'holding hotels' until a permanent property within a Local Authority is secured.

The Home Office has stated that it will liaise with Local Authorities in all instances however for Doncaster we have now received and confirmed the accommodation and family information for the total amount of 3 families that we were approved to accept.

In addition to the ARAP scheme, the Council has an existing commitment to welcome five families as part of the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) which has superseded the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme (SRRP), over a 6 month period. To ensure that we can provide a focused and targeted service to the families arriving under this, we have informed Migration Yorkshire that we will not be accepting any families until October from which date the 6 month arrival plan will commence; this is in line with other Local Authorities.

Name: Joanne Evans Signature: by email Date: 10/07/2021

Signature of Assistant Director (or representative)

ANY IMPLICATIONS SENT TO DEPARTMENTS SHOULD GENERALLY BE SUBMITTED AT LEAST 5 WORKING DAYS IN ADVANCE TO ENSURE THESE CAN BE GIVEN THE RELEVANT CONSIDERATION.

BOX 8

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS: (To be completed by the author).

All equality implications will be considered during the design and delivery of this programme to ensure the requirements of those with protected characteristics are taken into account.

Persons settled under the ARAP scheme will follow similar arrangements to those within the UK Resettlement Scheme albeit agreement has been given for families to access social housing. This is in line with the Veteran status held by the individuals and is supported through the Mayoral pledge and the Armed Forces Covenant which Doncaster Council is committed in supporting. In addition they will have access to NHS services, school placements, GP and Dentist waiting lists as local residents do.

BOX 9

RISK IMPLICATIONS: (To be completed by the author)

Home Office allocation – As already mentioned the impact of the increasing risk has meant that the Home Office has been asking the Refugee Council to request Local Authorities to take families earlier than agreed, we have been in a position to support. Due to the Scheme being voluntary and not all LA's taking part, it has left a shortfall. It is felt that if families are taken much earlier than planned, it may be a way for the Home Office to return to LA's and ask for an increase in their pledge size. If this should arise this would be escalated back to the Mayor, Chief Executive, Executive Board and Directors via the Assistant Director for Communities to clarify Doncaster's position, remembering this is a voluntary scheme.

In addition, there is a concern that the Home Office may also look to obtain their own accommodation, similar to Asylum Schemes, and place families themselves, then notifying LA's that they have arrived to pick up on the support. There is potential this could be through the existing Asylum pathway via Mears and the Head of Service for Communities – Community Safety has made contact with Mears who have confirmed at present no request has been made.

However, if Mears were used this would have the advantage of the Council being able to use the existing protocol in place with them, to not only find out where the family was going to be placed, but all the Council to veto placements in certain areas as at present.

Throughout the preparation period for the scheme, officers have been working with Migration Yorkshire and other Local Authorities to identify any risks and examples of best practice from previous cohorts of families. As such, we have worked with colleagues in the multi-agency group meetings to ensure that we have as many risks controls in place as possible, this includes:

- To mitigate the risk of the Home Office moving families into Doncaster before the agreed dates we have worked with other Local Authorities to ensure that Home Office appreciate the impact this could have on goodwill within this voluntary scheme which has been acknowledged and links to the 'holding hotel' process in place for those where a match with a LA or accommodation has been completed;

- St Leger Homes have procedures in place to ensure that the families feel safe, secure and welcome in their properties and local to mitigate any local hostility to the families, with the Communities team supporting and ensuring a 'Welcome to Doncaster' booklet is provided to inform of local arrangements and wider support;
- The school age children from the first family have been registered at a local school, will be reviewed for language support and have been offered a visit to the school during the holidays to ensure they feel welcome;
- The families will be fast tracked by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure they are job ready as soon as possible to ensure that they are able to integrate as soon as possible; and
- The Refugee Council will support the families in registering with GPs and Dentists with Public Health colleagues looking to see how they can ensure that the families are vaccinated against Covid-19 at the earliest opportunity.

BOX 10 CONSULTATION

Agreement for participation with the voluntary Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy has been granted following direct contact being made from the Home Office to the Chief Executive outlining its intentions and requesting support for families.

Discussions were undertaken with the Mayor, Executive Board and Directors to outline the ask of the Home Office and agreement reached on the number of families that would be welcomed to Doncaster. This was fed back to Migration Yorkshire who confirmed this agreement.

In addition discussions have been established via the established multi-agency working group as previously mentioned to ensure buy in and the correct support to ensure the project is a success. Local Ward members are being updated on where the accommodation falls within the Ward area for awareness.

The Chief Financial Officer has been consulted and supports this decision.

BOX 11 INFORMATION NOT FOR PUBLICATION

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, it is in the Public's interests for this decision to be published in full, redacting only the signatures.

Name: Gillian Parker **Signature** by email **Date:** 27/07/2021

Signature of FOI Lead Officer for service area where ODR originates

BOX 12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Please confirm if any Background Papers are included with this ODR No

(If YES please list and submit these with this form)

**BOX 13
AUTHORISATION**

Name: _Debbie John-Lewis_ Signature:  Date: _28/07/2021_

On behalf of Director of Adults Health and Wellbeing

Does this decision require authorisation by the Chief Financial Officer or other Officer

YES/NO

If yes please authorise below:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Chief Executive/Director/Assistant Director of _____

Consultation with Relevant Member(s)

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Designation _____

(e.g. Mayor, Cabinet Member or Committee Chair/Vice-Chair)

Declaration of Interest NO

If YES please give details below:

PLEASE NOTE THIS FORM WILL BE PUBLISHED ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE IN FULL UNLESS IT CONTAINS EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.

Once completed a PDF copy of this form and any relevant background papers should be forwarded to Governance Services at Democratic.Services@doncaster.gov.uk who will arrange publication.

It is the responsibility of the decision taker to clearly identify any information that is confidential or exempt and should be redacted before publication.