

AFGHAN CITIZENS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision? (yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	No
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1: Council Report – Afghan LES Resettlement Scheme Appendix 2: Financial Model LES/ACRS Appendix 3: MCHLG Letter Afghan Resettlement and Relocation

Summary

The report sets out the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and proposes the council extends its offer of accommodating Afghan families arriving in the UK under the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Resettlement Scheme, to those arriving under the ACRS

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Agree to the Council participating in the ACRS as detailed in this report and therefore extending its offer to accommodate and support up-to 5 Afghan families arriving in the UK under both the LES Resettlement Scheme and ACRS**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 Participation in the ACRS will allow the Council to extend the offer agreed by Full Council on 30th September 2021 to support the LES Scheme to more widely support Afghan families that have entered the UK through both the LES and ACRS schemes.
- 1.2 By extending the Councils support to the ACRS the Council can be more flexible in matching the families in need, to the size and availability of properties within the borough.

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2 Background

2.1 LES Resettlement Scheme / ARAP:

2.2 On 30th September a report was taken to Full Council detailing the LES Resettlement Scheme, and the supporting policy, referred to as the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

2.3 The report set out the government's funding instruction and tariff, with confirmation that the financial support package would extend to 3-years for each family under the scheme

2.4 The report also set out the expectation for the Council to ensure an Integration Support Package for each family (to be paid for by government funds set out in the funding instruction) was in place in preparation for a family's arrival.

2.5 The report taken to Full Council can be located in Appendix 1.

2.6 Full Council agreed that the Council could:

- Participate in the LES Resettlement Scheme and that the offer of accommodation and support was to be offered to 5 Afghan families under the ARAP
- Work with the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) in securing the properties

2.7 Since this decision was taken, the Council has:

- Secured a 4-bed property in the borough, and made an application to be matched to its first family under ARAP
- Secured (in principle) an additional 2-bed property
- Continued working with EERN to secure additional properties for Afghan families
- Agreed to the Integration Support Package being delivered by EERN for a period of (up-to) 3-years per family subject to a Service Level Agreement. This will include coordinating and delivering all aspects of integration and orientation.

2.8 Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

2.9 The Government confirmed the launch of the ACRS on 13th September 2021.

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- 2.10 The report taken to Full Council on 30th September stipulated that in the event the Council wishes to extend its offer of accommodation and support to the ACRS, this would be subject to a further report.
- 2.11 The ACRS will prioritise the following Afghan Citizens:
- Those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech and rule of law
 - Vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+)
- 2.12 The Government has committed to resettling 5,000 Afghans under this scheme in the first year, and up-to 20,000 in the proceeding years.
- 2.13 Referral and prioritisation for the ACRS is to be determined by 3 routes:
- Vulnerable and at-risk individuals who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme will be the first to be resettled under the ACRS. People who were notified by the UK Government that they had been called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, but were not able to board flights, will also be offered a place under the scheme if they subsequently come to the UK.
 - Working with United National High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify people most at risk and refer them for resettlement, replicating the approach the UK has taken in response to the conflict in Syria
 - The Government will work with our international partners in the region to implement a referral process for those inside Afghanistan (where safe passage can be arranged), and for those who have recently fled to countries in the region. This process will likely be affected by the ongoing situation within Afghanistan.
- 2.14 Anyone who is resettled through the ACRS will receive indefinite leave to remain in the UK and will be able to apply for British citizenship after 5 years under existing rules.
- 2.15 As outlined in the MHCLG Letter on Afghan Resettlement and Relocation (Appendix 3) the funding instruction and tariff for families arriving under ACRS is aligned to those under ARAP.
- 2.16 A further funding instruction received by the Council in October 21, confirmed that funding under both ARAP and ACRS would align, and subsequently all families arriving in the UK under both ARAP and ACRS will be eligible for the same financial support package and tariff, over a 3-year duration.

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- 2.17 Whilst the Council has made its first application for a family under ARAP, as the same funding instructions apply under ACRS, the Council wishes to be able to extend their offer to ensure and increase the successful matching of families to the properties available.
- 2.18 By extending the scheme we ensure the Council is not limited in its offer of support and can meet the needs of those refugees from both schemes. This can be achieved without the Council incurring any additional risks or needing to consider any additional financial implications than those already agreed to in the report submitted to the Council contained in Appendix 1.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1** An Impact assessment was presented in the report taken to Full Council on 30th September 2022 – refer to Appendix 1. These considerations are upheld for the purposes of this report as families under both ARAP and ACRS are subject to same eligibility in respect of housing, securing indefinite leave to remain, the Government funding instruction and tariff, and subsequent support package.
- 3.1.2** Consideration would need to be given to families under ACRS and any impact in respect of having more complex needs and more support in integration. This issue may be mitigated by ERRN who, having supported the Council in hosting two Syrian families, are experienced in addressing the complex needs of refugee families.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

- 3.2.2** The emphasis on the funded resettlement of Afghan refugees through an identified Government scheme ensures the best opportunities for successful integration and a positive future contribution to the UK.
- 3.2.3** The Council will work closely with the police in identifying suitable property and would ensure risks to the refugee family were identified and minimised and any community concerns addressed promptly

3.3 Safeguarding

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3.3.1 Any refugee household accommodated through the ARAP or ACRS scheme would benefit from close integration support by a case worker provide by the EERN. This would include safeguarding considerations with a duty to report safeguarding concerns in line with statutory requirements

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 It has been advised by Southeast Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) that matching families successfully against the properties secured is likely to be increased whereby we are willing to accept families under both the ACRS and ARAP. This is due to the size of the families arriving in the UK, in relation to the size of property the Council has or may go on to secure. Smaller properties may prove more challenging to fill and extending our offer to both ARAP an ACRS, risks are reduced.

3.4.2 The Council has already committed financially to a 4-bed property, and to the Integration Support Package being provided by EERN based on supporting up-to 5 families. Both financial and reputational risks are identified whereby we are unable to welcome/match a family due to them being eligible under ACRS but whereby we have both the support and property in place. By extending the Council's offer to welcome families under both schemes this is mitigated.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None

4 Financial Implications

4.1 All implications for funding of the ACRS are aligned to those identified for LES/ARAP. As such the funding implications and the financial model that were presented to Full Council on 30th September 2021 remain applicable to ACRS and can be relied upon for the purpose of this report.

4.2 These are detailed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, which is now referred to as the Afghan ARAP/ACRS finance model.

4.3 The amount the Council can claim for integration support from the Home Office per beneficiary under both ARAP and ACRS in year 1 is £10,500, reducing to £6,000 in year 2, and £4,020 in year 3.

4.4 For a family of 4 over a 3-year period (for example), the Council may claim £82,080. This is aligned to the tariff that was made available to Syrian households VPRS

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4.5 As with ARAP, a percentage of these funds will contribute towards any shortfalls in housing costs. As such, and as per the report taken to Full Council, the Council will not accept a single-person household on the grounds of financial viability. Education costs remain subject to separate funding.

4.6 The below table sets out the funding across each of the 3-years:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
LA Tariff (per person)	£10,500	£6,000	£4,020	£20,520
Education (per child)	Up to £4,500	0	0	Up to £4,500
English Language (per adult)	£850	0	0	£850
Health (per person)	£2,600	0	0	£2,600

4.7 The three-year funding offer is intended to taper with increasing independence and integration of the family. In the report taken to Full Council on 30th September it was anticipated that the support required under the LES/ARAP scheme would be within the funding envelope available, as support needs are expected to be lower than those required under the previous Syrian VPRS. This is due to most LES households lacking the vulnerabilities inherent in VPRS households.

4.8 Notwithstanding, by extending the Council's offer to the ACRS, there is a risk of families moving to the borough with more complex needs and requiring greater levels of support. To mitigate this, the Council is working with the EERN to deliver the Integration Support Package. EERN have extensive experience of supporting refugee families to integrate and have the significant added value of a volunteer network to help address need within a 3-year period, mitigating such risks.

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4.9 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** It is expected that support costs should be fully covered by funding from the Home Office for the three-year period. However, should any unforeseen costs in excess of the funding arise, these will need to be met from existing budgets within the housing service.

4.10 Should support be required beyond the funded three-year period, a report should be brought back to the appropriate Committee to inform members and to identify a funding option.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 There is no legal obligation on the Council to participate in the Government's ACRS. Should the Council agree to participate in the ACRS to be eligible for the funding the Council will be required to abide by the Government's requirements for the scheme.

5.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** Both the schemes are conveniently dealt with under the same funding instruction dated 6th January 2022. Members are referred to the legal advice given previously. The recommendation is sound, and the matter need not be resolved by full Council.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations -** There are no known climate change implications

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Successful integration of refugee families is identified as being a significant factor in ensuring community safety issues are minimised. The ACRS scheme is funded over three years offering reasonable assurance that accommodated families will integrate successfully.

6.5 **Partnerships:** - The Council is working effectively with Surrey County Council, Surrey Police, NHS organisations, neighbouring Councils, and various voluntary groups, in particular Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network in providing support to Afghan refugees.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

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Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Relocation Scheme – Full Council –
30th September 2021 (Appendix 1)

Afghan LES/ACRS Finance Model (Appendix 2)

MHCLG Letter on Afghan Resettlement and Relocation – 13th September
2021 (Appendix 3)

Other papers:

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) S&R Committee
22nd November 2016