

Report of Assistant Chief Executive Citizens and Communities

Report to Scrutiny Board (Citizens and Communities)

Date: 15 February 2016

Subject: Syrian Refugee Relocation Programme Update

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 In October 2015 the report to Scrutiny Board on migration included information about the positive response Leeds gave in relation to the Government call for support for Syrian refugees.
- 1.2 This report provides Scrutiny Board with an overview of the current Syrian Refugee Relocation programme and how this has been implemented in Leeds.
- 1.3 It explains the process which was followed; some of the challenges faced and provides assurance that services are accessible and effectively responding to the needs of the Syrian refugees on this programme.
- 1.4 Finally it highlights any ongoing concerns/challenges which are being addressed.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members of Scrutiny Board are asked to note the contents of this report, recognising the considerable work taking place within each service to address the needs of the Syrian refugees.

3.0 Purpose of this report

- 3.1 To provide information on the current position of the Syrian Refugee Relocation programme, and how services are addressing the issues arising.
- 3.2 This report does not cover migration more widely, as this was covered in the October Scrutiny report and the follow up Scrutiny discussion which took place in January.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 Our vision is for Leeds to be a compassionate, caring city that helps all its residents benefit from the effects of the city's economic growth. To support this vision we are actively engaging with the current refugee crisis. We have a long history in Leeds of being a welcoming city and we aim to continue this. In doing so we will be realistic about what is possible, recognising where there are issues and concerns and address these appropriately.
- 4.2 Leeds engaged with the Afghan and Syrian relocation programmes in 2014/15 and 32 Afghans and 25 Syrians are now settled in Leeds under this scheme. The learning from these programmes has been useful in understanding the needs of the current programme, and have formed a strong starting point for work to progress.
- 4.3 At the 23 September 2015 Executive Board Report on migration it was agreed to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) to liaise with Home Office colleagues to support the relocation of up to 200 Syrian refugees into Leeds over the next two years.
- 4.4 Since the agreement by Executive Board the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Head of Migration Yorkshire have spoken to the Home Office and agreed to support the relocation of up to 200 Syrian refugees, and relocating 25 of the 200 before the end of 2015. There was considerable discussion and negotiations before a funding arrangement, which we believe adequately covers all of the costs involved, was agreed.
- 4.5 An officer Refugee Task Force was established, chaired by James Rogers to provide strategic leadership to address the challenges and to oversee the programme of action. The group included members from the main council services affected, DWP, NHS England, West Yorkshire Police, and members of the Migration Partnership.

5.0 Main Issues

- 5.1 Since the agreement was made 7 families (25 people) have arrived in Leeds. They arrived on 8 December 2015 and considerable work took place by all services to ensure that they would be fully supported, including over the Christmas close down period. The following highlights the work which has taken place:
- 5.2 **Migration Yorkshire** have coordinated the work across the region for phase 1 and a formal model of working for the remainder of the Relocation

Programme has been agreed. This involves providing a central point for W Yorkshire local authorities from where advice, guidance and support can be found to enable local delivery of services to the Syrian refugees. In addition Migration Yorkshire will coordinate work with central government, and provide a single point of contact.

5.2.1 Migration Yorkshire is applying as a lead bidder to the European Structural Investment Fund, and if successful will work with a number of delivery partners across the region. The value of this 'vulnerable and marginalised new migrants' programme will be £2.82 m for projects lasting 2 years (includes both Big Lottery and ESIF funding). The delivery of the main programme is expected to begin in late 2016

5.3 Migrant third sector – there have been a number of welcome meetings which have been well attended and resulted in a focus on ways in which support could be provided, campaigning, volunteering and generally trying to understand the current situation. A number of the organisations have reported overwhelming levels of offers of support from members of the public and other organisations. Offers received include donations of clothing and food, accommodation, practical help and support for individuals and families. One specific area has been in relation to ensuring that donations go to the right place quickly and easily, and a wish to maintain momentum. A website <http://bit.ly/leedsrw> has been developed by third sector colleagues which brings together practical resources and sign-posting to organisations who are supporting refugees.

5.3.1 The council has provided a temporary depot at Richmond Hill for donations. This work is going well with Yorkshire Aid, Refugee Start, City of Sanctuary and LASSN taking leading roles. In addition PAFRAS are looking at using the centre for clothes and food. There is an electronic ordering system now in place to streamline the process of getting donations to organisations who will then distribute these appropriately

5.4 Housing – the 7 Syrian families to Leeds have been accommodated through a local housing association. There has been a considerable amount of work to ensure everything was ready, and occupational therapists have worked well with others to ensure appropriate adjustments are made/in place for their arrival.

5.4.1 There are currently 15 vacant properties in the homeless scheme and so properties can be immediately available. However, given the commitment to taking 200 Syrian refugees there will be a need for nearer 60 properties in total and this may mean there is a need to use council housing as the programme progresses.

5.5 Health - work has continued to streamline the health review processes for refugees, the review process (prior to arrival) has been coordinated by NHS England with clinical input from York Street Medical Practice. The refugees are registered with York Street Medical Practice on arrival and the team at the practice have reported that this registration process has worked well to date. Work is planned to raise awareness with main stream GP practices, for

when families move from the York Street practice, and link with practices to establish lessons learnt for any future arrivals.

- 5.6 Adult Social Care** - some of the Syrian refugees are particularly vulnerable due to their traumatic experiences, which are likely to impact on their mental health. There may also be support needs arising for Syrian refugees with physical disabilities. Appropriate support is being provided to meet these needs.
- 5.7 Community Safety** – there has been a small number of increased crime/hate crime/anti-social behaviour incidents eg graffiti on refugee’s property, and graffiti in Armley. Although they appear to be isolated incidents there is a need to be aware of the potential for further incidents.
 - 5.7.1 One of the perpetrators in Paris allegedly had a Syrian passport and it has been suggested that may have entered the country as a refugee. There is a worry that this could fuel increased far-right activity. The Home Office is providing narrative around security checks of refugees and when available these key messages will be used appropriately in Leeds.
 - 5.7.2 There is good understanding of the position in localities and work is taking place to ease tensions, but it is recognised that issues have been amplified by the national press. Good relationships have been established with the Yorkshire Evening Post and other local media which will continue.
- 5.8 Communications** - as stated above, conversations with the Yorkshire Evening Post and other local media have taken place and these will continue. This has resulted in very positive stories with Calendar and Look North. The Facebook page for YEP has been generally positive, although Look North and Calendar facebook pages are less so. There appears to be more empathy to the written article than the visual presentation.
 - 5.8.1 Proactive key messages has been produced which challenges myths and provides a unified narrative (appendix 1)
- 5.9 Children** – a welcome is being planned, led by Hamara, where welcome packs will be distributed to the children. These will include a personalised card for each child produced in Arabic and English by primary schools. A welcoming leaflet for families has also been produced.
 - 5.9.1 The North West cluster has produced a welcome to Leeds film for children coming into the city, and this will be ready shortly.
 - 5.9.2 Children’s are very conscious of the emotional health needs of the children coming in and so there is a focus on mental health provision in schools where appropriate.
- 5.10 Employment and skills** – the strong partnership working including, between the social justice teams (Job Centre Plus) and Migration Yorkshire, have made sure that everything is working well with the new refugees, and everything was in place, including benefits, before Christmas, for most

families. There was a misunderstanding in relation to bank accounts for 1 family but this did not impact on them receiving services.

- 5.10.1 A continuing concern is the provision of ESOL and work continues to fully understand the provision, capacity and where it is being delivered. More funding is being made available centrally for ESOL and this could provide additional support for the needs in the city.

5.11 Support for Advice and Advocacy Services - Executive Board endorsed the use of up to £100k from the local welfare support scheme to support third sector organisations deal with current capacity challenges (funding available to support all refugees and asylum seekers, not confined to the Syrian Relocation programme). There have been 15 applications to this fund which are currently being processed. The intention is that successful bids will provide additionality, increase capacity and provide sustainability for the service.

6.0 Overview

6.1 The information above provides an overview of the work taking place to address the needs of the Syrian Refugees under the Relocation Programme. Whilst there are still challenges the building blocks in place provide a good platform from which continue.

6.2 There are ongoing challenges particularly around funding, ESOL provision, and the media, which are also part of the wider migration agenda and are being addressed in that context.

6.3 The government has achieved its target of bringing 1000 Syrian refugees into the country before Christmas, and is now taking an opportunity to look at lessons learned, before continuing the process. The main programme with therefore recommence in April.

6.4 Planning in Leeds will take account of lessons learnt to date and will look at planning and coordinating work around ensuring a further 175 people (around 50 families) are settled in Leeds.

6.5 There are still some key questions about how the funding and arrangements will be progressed eg around reporting requirements, position if refugees move, what level of need will attract additional funding etc. Migration Yorkshire are negotiating with Central Government to fully understand and clarify these.

7.0 Corporate Considerations

7.1 Consultation and Engagement – this report provides an overview of work that has taken place and so there is no relevant consultation and engagement to take place.

7.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration – all work in respect to meeting the needs of the Syrian refugees has taken equality and diversity into account.

- 7.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan** – Leeds is a welcoming and compassionate city and the recommendations in this support those values.
- 7.4 Resources and value for money** – The costs of participating in the refugee relocation schemes are covered by specific grant from the Government.
- 7.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In** - There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report. The report is subject to call-in.
- 7.6 Risk Management** – Specific service risks are identified and addressed as appropriate by the service.
- 8.0 Conclusion**
- 8.1 The Syrian Refugee Relocation Programme is being implemented in Leeds, with the support of Migration Yorkshire and the third sector. This is ensuring that the needs of the refugees are being appropriately met.
- 8.2 The work to ensure the first 25 Syrians are settled in Leeds will be continued and learning taken forward to ensure that further Syrian refugees will also be welcomed and settled.
- 9.0 Recommendation**
- 9.1 Members of Scrutiny Board are recommended to note the contents of this report
- 10.0 Background Documents¹**
- 10.1 There are no specific background documents linked to this report.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Overarching key messages

- Leeds is a compassionate city and a City of Sanctuary.
- These refugees have come from a situation of extreme danger and conflict, desperately in need of help, to seek safety and refuge.
- We have come together as a city, to work together to offer them sanctuary, which we believe as a Compassionate City is the right thing to do.
- Leeds City Council's executive board recommended that the city should propose to take 200 Syrian refugees over a two-year period. This number was recommended by a task group, which featuring partners from across the city, was established to co-ordinate and plan the city's response to the refugee crisis.
- Conversations are still ongoing with the government to discuss terms and funding arrangements around this proposed agreed number for Leeds.
- As such, we have no information at this stage on whether these will be families, what ages the children will be or whether they are unaccompanied children or whether they are adults;
- 25 Syrian refugees have arrived in Leeds during October 2015. The package was agreed as part of the previous government Syrian relocation scheme that LCC was signed up to.
- £100k has also been made available by LCC through a local welfare scheme to support third sector organisations supporting refugees in dealing with a range of challenges.
- The direct impact on communities from the refugees arriving will be negligible or nil.

School Places - key messages

- Due to the economic success of Leeds and the increased numbers of people and families moving to the city, as well as the increase in population across the country, Leeds has had ten years of rising birth rates.
- This is the reason why there has been such an increased demand on school places, **not the refugee situation.**
- In 2016 we expect that 10,350 children will start reception. Even if there were 50 refugee children starting primary school in that year - **and we do not know the ages of the planned refugee children** - this would be around just one per cent of the overall primary cohort for that year.
- The city has offered to take 200 refugees and this was considered a manageable number in terms of their individual housing needs, schooling, health, etc.
- However this is over a two-year period and there will be considerable issues to take account of in terms of the specific needs of the family and affected individuals, suitability of accommodation, availability of housing, health needs, before any decisions can be taken on school places for the children.

Public Health - key messages

- NHS England is working closely with Clinical Commissioning Group colleagues to ensure that health services are prepared for the arrivals.
- Work has been undertaken by York Street Medical Practice – a specialist asylum seeker practice within Leeds to review the available health records for the new arrivals and identify any health needs that would require secondary or specialist care in order to ensure services were accessible locally.
- York Street Medical Practice is also providing primary care registration for individuals on arrival and a health check coordinated with the case worker for Migration Yorkshire.

Housing - key messages

- Families classed as refugees are entitled to stay in the UK for an initial five-year-period. During this time they are entitled to access the same services as all British citizens. This includes the opportunity to apply for and live in council housing.
- Syrian refugees arriving in Leeds will be housed appropriately on their arrival - It is estimated that only a very small number of families arriving (between 5 & 10) out of the 200 will be housed in council housing.
- Funding for the Syrian refugees is provided by the Home Office for housing, support, health and education.
- A number of offers have also been made by residents, community groups and organisations offering somewhere for the refugees to stay These offers are being worked through by the council and partners to assess their suitability.
- Appropriate accommodation will be sourced across the whole housing market, including offers of support from housing associations and third sector organisations.

Key Stats:

- There are 24,118 (30/09/15) households on the housing register – **this is not a waiting list**
- 24% (5,700) of customers have identified housing needs (Band A & B).
- 76% have no identified housing need.
- Of the 24,118 households on the housing register 5,972 (25%) are council tenants who have expressed a preference to move.
- Over 11,000 households (45%) on the housing register have not bid for a home in the last 12 months.
- The average waiting time for households who were rehoused in 2014/15 was 48 weeks across all areas of the city, property types and sizes. Approximately 4,500 – 5,000 homes are allocated per year & 1,000 households are nominated to Housing Association partners - therefore there are 5k – 6k social housing allocations per year.

