

Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

Date: 12th January 2022

Report of: Head of Community Relations and Cohesion

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment, Leeds City Council

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- In June 2021 it was agreed that Leeds City Council would participate in the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which is the scheme that offers relocation or other assistance to current and former Locally Employed Staff in Afghanistan due to the deteriorating security situation in the country.
- It was agreed that the council would pledge to take 40 people (8 properties) with a view to sourcing 4 more up to a maximum of 60 people. The pledge is based on an average family size of 5 people.
- Following the mass evacuation of Afghanistan in August 2021 and the scale of the crisis the number of people who have been evacuated to the UK has increased and the Government have sought support from local authorities to provide additional pledges of accommodation.
- The work set out in this report contributes to the Best Council Plan Priorities of Safe, Stronger Communities. Leeds is a growing and richly diverse city, with people of different ages, backgrounds, cultures and beliefs living and working alongside each other. As a city of Sanctuary, we celebrate this diversity and want Leeds to be a welcoming city for all, where people get on with each other and feel part of their local neighbourhood.

Recommendations:

That the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment approves:

- a) Increasing Leeds City Council's pledge to rehouse Afghan Refugees through the ARAP scheme from 60 to 142 people (28 properties in total).
- b) The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is responsible for the implementation of decisions in respect of this report.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. The UK Government has been running the ARAP scheme to support locally employed staff in Afghanistan working in often dangerous and challenging situations, in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK military forces since 2013. A Ministerial Letter was sent to Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives on 3 June 2021 seeking support and effective integration of all those locally employed staff who choose to come to the UK.

2. Those arriving in the UK under the ARAP scheme have been assessed as being 'under serious threat to life'. Those who qualify and choose to relocate to the UK with their families are not expected to return to Afghanistan.
3. Following the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of international forces in August 2021 the UK have successfully evacuated over 15,000 people to safety in the largest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history.
4. As a result of the mass evacuation local authorities have been asked to increase their pledges for the number of individuals who have been evacuated to the UK from Afghanistan under the ARAP scheme with resettlement and rehousing.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

5. Migrant communities are valuable contributors to the city's economy, culture and diversity and Leeds aspires to ensure people are welcomed and supported. Leeds has a long held commitment to support asylum seekers and refugees and is dedicated to being a city of sanctuary.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

6. Consultation has taken place with the Executive Member for Communities, Director of Communities, Housing and Environment and the Chief Officer Safer, Stronger Communities Team.

What are the resource implications?

1. There are no resource implications for the council in supporting the ARAP Scheme and additional pledges as it is fully funded by the Home Office. The council receive £20,520 per person for resettlement support for a 3 year period from their arrival date.

What are the legal implications?

2. Local authorities participating in the scheme will be required to meet the obligations set out in the Home Office Grant Agreement.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

3. The main risk is not identifying suitable accommodation in time. Work is taking place with Housing Leeds to manage and mitigate the risks.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

4. This decision will have a positive impact of the Health and Wellbeing of individuals arriving on this scheme.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

5. Leeds doesn't agree to increase its pledge to support the ARAP scheme.

b) How will success be measured?

6. The grant funding will include specific monitoring requirements.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

7. Work will commence immediately to support the increased pledge on the ARAP scheme.