



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

Report author: Dinah Beckett

Tel: 0113 378 9012

Approval to vary the existing Partnership Agreements with North Yorkshire Council and City of Doncaster Council and vary the Grant Agreement with British Refugee Council to continue to provide wraparound support to residents of the Afghan 'Bridging Hotels' in North Yorkshire and Doncaster.

Date: 17th April 2023

Report of: Regional Asylum and Refugee Integration Manager, Migration Yorkshire

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

On 29 December 2020, the Defence Secretary and Home Secretary announced the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This scheme offers relocation or other assistance to former Locally Employed Staff (LES) in Afghanistan to reflect the changing situation in Afghanistan.

The ARAP launched on 1 April 2021 and remains open. In August 2021, an emergency evacuation known as 'Operation Pitting' was launched to provide safe passage to the UK to eligible Afghans. This has since been extended to several 'at risk' groups of Afghans including people who worked for the British Council and people who have been displaced from Afghanistan for many years and have been assessed as suitable for resettlement by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Given the rapid implementation of the programmes and the large numbers of people involved, the Home Office has commissioned hotels around the country known as 'bridging hotels' where Afghan evacuees and refugees are housed until long term accommodation is sourced.

Hotel residents are supported to settle in and make longer term plans for life in the UK through the provision of 'wraparound support' in the hotels. The support is funded by the Home Office by payment to the local authority which hosts the hotel. In Yorkshire and Humber, Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) co-ordinates this arrangement as the accountable body by processing payments and managing sub-contract arrangements.

North Yorkshire Council (previously North Yorkshire County Council prior to local government re-organisation which took place on 1 April 2023) has been the location of two bridging hotels, one of which closed on 31 July 2022. It has agreed to vary the existing Partnership Agreement with Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) to include the provision of a 'wraparound support' for Afghan evacuees and refugees in the bridging hotels in North Yorkshire to 31 July 2023.

City of Doncaster Council is the location of one bridging hotel. It has agreed to vary the existing Partnership Agreement with Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) to include the provision of a 'wraparound support' and therapeutic support for Afghan evacuees and refugees in the bridging hotel in Doncaster to 31 July 2023.

A variation to the existing Grant Agreement with British Refugee Council ('Refugee Council') is required to deliver this service and provide for a revised and updated budget and service provision.

Recommendations

The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is requested to:

- a) Approve a variation to the existing Partnership Agreement between Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and North Yorkshire Council to provide 'wraparound' support to residents of the Afghan bridging hotels in North Yorkshire to 31 July 2023. The variation agreement has a retrospective commencement date based on when the service commenced of 1 September 2021.
- b) Approve a variation to the existing Partnership Agreement between Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and City of Doncaster Council to provide 'wraparound' support to residents of the Afghan bridging hotel in Doncaster to 31 July 2023. The variation agreement has a retrospective commencement date based on when the service commenced of 1 December 2021.

- c) Approve a variation to the existing Partnership Agreement between Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and City of Doncaster Council to provide therapeutic support to residents of the Afghan bridging hotel in Doncaster to 31 July 2023. The variation agreement has a retrospective commencement date based on when the service commenced of 1 June 2022.
- d) Approve a variation to the existing Grant Agreement between Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and the Refugee Council to deliver the above services with revised and updated budgets and service provision.
- e) To approve the entry into such other agreements that the Head of Migration Yorkshire believes are needed to enable the delivery of a wraparound services to residents of the Afghan bridging hotels.

What is this report about?

- 1.1 The report outlines the proposal for Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) to enter into variations to existing partnership arrangements with LA Partners North Yorkshire Council, City of Doncaster Council and delivery partner the Refugee Council.
- 1.2 Wraparound support is services, guidance and advice to support new arrivals who have arrived in the UK under ACRS/ARAP to settle and integrate to life in the UK.
- 1.3 Therapeutic support is services to promote well-being following the trauma of rapid flight from Afghanistan and continued uncertainty while living in temporary hotel accommodation.
- 1.4 The wraparound and therapeutic support for residents of Afghan bridging Hotels will be a variation to existing Partnership Agreements with partner LAs from 2016 to 2024, to participate in the Vulnerable People's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). Under this arrangement, support is provided by the Refugee Council to those people resettled in regional LA areas under the relevant programme.
- 1.5 Leeds City Council and British Refugee Council entered into a Grant Agreement for the operation of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme on 1st April 2016 ("the Grant Agreement"). The Grant Agreement has gone through various subsequent variations and continues to provide for integration services for refugees arriving in the region through resettlement routes.
- 1.6 Since August 2021 and the UK government's emergency Afghan evacuation, 'Operation Pitting' many Afghan families have been staying in bridging hotels waiting to secure long term accommodation. The Home Office requires that local authorities provide a wraparound service for these families while they reside in the hotels. Migration Yorkshire is in a strong position to facilitate the provision of wraparound support through our existing partnership with the Refugee Council (See paragraph 1.5 above).
- 1.7 The agreement to vary partnership arrangements to provide wraparound services in the hotels was made at pace to enable Refugee Council to manage their staffing and resources to deliver this support. Initially local authorities agreed budgets for 6 months with a 3-month break clause. These have subsequently been extended to meet the on-going requirement for support within the bridging hotel estate.

- 1.8 The bridging hotel near Selby, North Yorkshire was open from 1 September 2021 to 31 July 2022. The bridging hotel in Scarborough has been open from 1 September 2021 and the Home Office has extended until at least 31 July 2023. As wraparound support is required within the hotels, North Yorkshire Council has confirmed agreement to extending the service being provided by Refugee Council in line with each hotel's contract with the Home Office.
- 1.9 The bridging hotel in Doncaster was opened on 1 December 2021 and the Home Office has extended the contract in the bridging hotel in Doncaster until at least 31 July 2023. As wraparound support is required within the hotels, City of Doncaster Council has confirmed agreement to extending the service being provided by Refugee Council in line with the hotel's contract with the Home Office.
- 1.10 City of Doncaster Council has confirmed they require Refugee Council to continue providing therapeutic support in the hotel until 31 July 2023.
- 1.11 Migration Yorkshire is based within Leeds City Council, but works across the region, reporting into a Migration Yorkshire Board made up of the fifteen member local authorities. Migration Yorkshire provides strategic leadership and local support across the Yorkshire and Humber region. It works with national, regional and local partners to ensure that the region can deal with, and benefit from, migration and works with agencies across the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to help support the delivery of high quality services to migrants in a way that benefits everyone living in local communities.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 2.1 Refugee Council has agreed to provide wraparound support in the bridging hotels in North Yorkshire and has provided a service proposal and budgets covering the period from 1 September 2021 to 31 July 2022 for the bridging hotel, Selby and from 1 September 2021 to 31 July 2023 for the bridging hotel, Scarborough (see Appendix 2).
- 2.2 Refugee Council has agreed to provide wraparound support in the bridging hotel in Doncaster and has provided a service proposal and budgets covering the period 1 December 2021 to 31 July 2023 (see Appendix 3).
- 2.3 The wraparound service contributes to:
 - Enabling people to adapt to life in the UK, and to cope with living in temporary accommodation for an uncertain length of time.
 - Keeping people safe from harm – for instance thorough ensuring people understand their rights and are informed about life in the UK. Reporting critical incidents and providing support to individuals and families affected by domestic abuse, hate crime, modern slavery or other complex needs.
 - Supporting people to improve skills, helping people into work and into better jobs – for example through support with access to schooling and other further education
 - Supporting people to access benefits and housing
- 2.4 The wraparound service provided by Refugee Council meets the requirements of 'Post-arrival relocation support' as specified in Schedule 1 of the 'Funding Instruction for local authorities

in the support of the United Kingdom’s Afghan Schemes: hotel wraparound support’ 2012-2022 and 2022-2023 from the Home Office (see Appendices 4a and 4b).

2.5 Refugee Council has agreed to provide therapeutic support as requested by City of Doncaster Council in the bridging hotel in Doncaster and has provided a service proposal and budget covering the period 1 June 2022 to 31 July 2023 which have been agreed by City of Doncaster Council (see Appendix 5).

2.6 The therapeutic service contributes to:

- Promoting guest well-being while residing in the hotel
- Identifying signs of trauma and mental distress and referring to services accordingly
- Adapting to life in the UK
- Reducing mental distress

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

3.1 Although this service will not directly impact Leeds residents, it will have a larger regional value. Some of the Afghan hotel residents accessing this service may move to Leeds in the future.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: n/a

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

4.1 The service was set up at speed to meet the needs of Afghan evacuees who were placed in hotels on arrival by the Home Office.

4.2 The service delivery takes place in North Yorkshire and Doncaster.

What are the resource implications?

5.1 The agreed budgets for provision of wraparound and therapeutic services in bridging hotels are:

Hotel name	Dates of agreement	Local Authority	Type of service	Total budget
Bridging hotel, Selby	1/10/2021 – 31/7/2022	North Yorkshire Council	Wraparound (App 2)	£570,232
Bridging hotel, Scarborough	1/9/2021 – 31/7/2023			
Bridging Hotel, Doncaster	1/12/2021 – 31/7/2023	City of Doncaster Council	Wraparound (App 3)	£470,207

Bridging Hotel, Doncaster	1/6/2022 – 31/7/23	City of Doncaster Council	Therapeutic (App 5)	£49,987
Total				£1,090,426

- 5.2 The Home Office pays local authorities £28 per person per night for the provision of wraparound and local support for the guest in the bridging hotels. North Yorkshire Council and City of Doncaster Council have agreed to make the above payment to Refugee Council for provision of the wraparound and therapeutic services (see Appendices 2, 3 and 5).
- 5.3 Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) uses processes set out in the Partnership Agreements with North Yorkshire Council, City of Doncaster Council and the Grant Agreement with Refugee Council to deliver the management of this variation.

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

- 6.1 The wraparound service is of a poor standard and does not meet needs.
This is managed by ensuring Refugee Council has access to Schedule 1 of the Home Office Funding Instructions (Appendices 4a and 4b) and is fully aware of the requirements of the service. Regular operational meetings are held to ensure the smooth running of the service. The Refugee Council has a history of working for local authority Partners delivering high quality integration services, so these are well established relationships.
- 6.2 The therapeutic service is of a poor standard and does not meet needs.
The Refugee Council has a history of delivering high quality therapeutic services to refugees in Doncaster, so these are well established relationships. The agreement has been reviewed and revised to meet the needs of the local authority Partner, and clients and Refugee Council. There are regular operational meetings to oversee the delivery of the service.
- 6.3 The hotel estate changes suddenly with new hotels opening or others closing.
Refugee Council developed the service at pace and has demonstrated the ability to be flexible to the needs of the service and all agreements include a 3-month break clause. The Home Office needs the agreement of the local authority to stand up a new hotel and it works with local authorities to ensure smooth arrangements when hotels need to close.

What are the legal implications?

- 7.1 The approval to vary the agreements is a Key Decision due to the sums of money involved, and is subject to call-in. Regulations require that the Council publishes a notice at least 28 clear calendar days in advance of a key decision being taken. This report also contains confidential information under the Access to Information Rules.
- 7.2 As the requested variations pertain to Leeds City Council's partnership arrangements with North Yorkshire Council, City of Doncaster Council and the Refugee Council, specifically a Partnership Agreement with North Yorkshire Council and City of Doncaster Council and a Grant Agreement with the Refugee Council, Leeds City Council will have no contractual control over enforcement of the terms, unlike a contract for services. The only sanction available with grant payments is for Leeds City Council to claw-back grant monies unspent or spent on matters for which the grant wasn't provided.

- 7.3 As the requested variations pertain to partnership arrangements, specifically a Partnership Agreement and a Grant Agreement, they are not subject to Leeds City Council's Contracts Procedure Rules or the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, but good practice and transparency will be observed throughout.
- 7.4 There is no overriding legal obstacle preventing the variation of the existing Partnership Agreement between Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and North Yorkshire County Council or the variation of the existing Partnership Agreement between Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and City of Doncaster Council or the variation of the existing Grant Agreement between Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) and the Refugee Council. In making their final decision, the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment should be satisfied that the course of action chosen represents best value for Leeds City Council (as the accountable body for Migration Yorkshire).

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 8.1 North Yorkshire Council or City of Doncaster Council could have delivered the service directly but asked Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire) to vary the agreement with Refugee Council to provide the hotel wraparound service because they did not have the capacity to stand up the service at short notice.
- 8.2 City of Doncaster Council requested the variation in the agreement in order to provide therapeutic support because of the emerging need that was identified among hotel guests in order that the service be provided at pace.

How will success be measured?

- 9.1 Regular operational meetings are held between North Yorkshire Council, Refugee Council and Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire). Regular operational meetings are held between City of Doncaster Council, Refugee Council and Leeds City Council (Migration Yorkshire).
- 9.2 Afghan evacuees and refugees will move from bridging hotels into long term accommodation and will successfully settle and integrate into their local communities.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 10.1 The service is already being delivered, so this allows for a continuation of the arrangement.

Appendices

- **Appendix 1** – Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening.
- **Appendix 2 – Confidential** -proposals, budgets and agreements for the provision of wraparound support between Refugee Council and North Yorkshire Council.
- **Appendix 3 – Confidential** - proposals, budgets and agreements for the provision of wraparound support between Refugee Council and City of Doncaster Council.
- **Appendix 4a** - Funding Instruction for local authorities in the support of the United Kingdom's Afghan Schemes: hotel wraparound support, 2021-2022.
- **Appendix 4b** - Funding Instruction for local authorities in the support of the United Kingdom's Afghan Schemes: hotel wraparound support, 2022-2023.

- **Appendix 5 – Confidential** - proposals, budgets and agreements for the provision of therapeutic support between Refugee Council and City of Doncaster Council.

Background papers

n/a