

Decision Pathway – Report



PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 09 March 2021

TITLE	Future Commitment of Bristol City Council to the UK Government Resettlement Scheme		
Ward(s)	All		
Author: Anne James	Job title: Commissioning Manager - refugees		
Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland	Executive Director lead: Hugh Evans		
Proposal origin: Councillor			
Decision maker: Cabinet Member			
Decision forum: Cabinet			
<p>Purpose of Report: Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, a report was progressing through the council's decision making processes to agree to support long term the resettlement of refugees in Bristol through the Home Office resettlement programmes. This decision making process was paused due to the coronavirus and the resettlement of refugees from abroad was also paused. On 10 November 2020, the Government restarted some resettlement to achieve its overall target to resettle 20,000 people through the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). It is likely 20,000 people will have been resettled in the UK by April 2021, of these Bristol resettled 398. The current VPRS scheme will be replaced with a new UK Resettlement Scheme. The Government has made a commitment to reopen resettlement for one year in 2021-22 with a new national target to resettle 5000 refugees a year; decision 1 and 3 relate to this Government commitment asking Bristol to commit to resettle at least 15 families, 80 people in 2021-22</p> <p>This report also asks the Cabinet to make a future commitment to continue to support the UK Government Resettlement Scheme. The Government <i>may extend</i> resettlement to new arrivals in 2022 and beyond and decisions 2 and 4 relate to a request to ask the Cabinet to agree to continue with resettlement, aiming to resettle at least 15 families, 80 people each year.</p>			
Evidence Base			
What are the UK's resettlement schemes?			
<p>The UK has three resettlement schemes that it operates in partnership with the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM): The (Syrian) vulnerable persons resettlement scheme (VPRS) and the vulnerable children resettlement scheme (VCRS) and Community Sponsorship. The VPRS and the VCRS will end in spring 2021. The schemes are delivered by the Syrian Resettlement Team in the Adult Care department within People. The UK also has the Community Sponsorship Scheme. This scheme gives community sponsors and groups the responsibility of supporting a refugee family who are already being resettled in the UK under either the VPRS or the VCRS.</p> <p>The resettlement schemes provide sanctuary to those refugees in greatest need of protection, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk.</p>			
The Bristol Resettlement Scheme			
<p>The Council had a target of resettling 100 families from the Home Office Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme by April 2020. The VPRS team has resettled 73 families and an additional two families will arrive shortly which brings the number of people resettled through the VPRS and VCRS to 377. In Bristol there are three community sponsorship groups who have resettled four refugee families, an additional 21 people.</p> <p>The target of resettling 400 people in Bristol has been narrowly missed as 398 people will have been resettled by April 2021. An additional 27 additional people are supported by the Syrian Resettlement Team who are children who</p>			

joined their family through family reunion or who are babies born to resettled families after their arrival in the UK .

A holistic package of support was provided to the resettled families including help related to health, education, language and job opportunities.

What will happen to the UK's resettlement schemes from 2020?

From 2020 the Conservative Government plans to consolidate the VPRS, the VCRS and an additional scheme which operates in the North of England, the Gateway scheme, into one 'global resettlement scheme.' This scheme will also incorporate the community sponsorship scheme. The new UK Resettlement Scheme will aim to resettle approximately 5,000 refugees in its first year of operation. The targets beyond the first year are not publicly known.

The Bristol Offer

The Bristol VPRS Resettlement Scheme together with partners in the NHS have provided lifesaving treatments for nine children and three adults, and life changing treatments for many more children. Sadly, two children died from cancer since arriving in the UK despite every effort from oncology services, but this is a cold reminder of how ill some of the children are who arrive in Bristol under the resettlement scheme. There are also people who have been victims of torture and gender based violence whose lives have been very much improved since coming to the UK.

The film shown as part of this presentation highlights the importance of resettlement. It changes the lives of families who have suffered immeasurably through the impact of war in their home countries. The pause in resettlement has been devastating to the families who had hoped to be resettled. Another year has been added to the time they have spent in refugee camps or living in precarious homes and jobs in their countries of asylum in the Middle East.

Outcomes for families supported by the council's Syrian Resettlement Team are reported in Appendix 1. The VPRS scheme has been successful and it is recommended that the council participates in the new UK resettlement Scheme which brings together the VPRS and VCRS into a global resettlement scheme. This report is requesting agreement to resettle 15 families in the first year of operation of the new UK resettlement Scheme (2021-22) but also to agree to resettle 15 families a year if the Government extends the scheme beyond this first year. The scheme will continue to focus on refugees "greatest in need of assistance, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk." It will have an expanded geographical focus beyond the Middle East and North Africa.

The Financial Cost

The Local Authority is funded over £20k per person and in return is required to support each refugee for five years. The four community sponsorship families are funded by the sponsorship groups. The Government funds the first 12 months of a VPRS and VCRS refugee's resettlement costs through the overseas aid budget. Further funding is provided for years 2-5 of the scheme which is allocated on a 'tariff basis'. In practice, this means that the Government reimburses the local authority. The Home Office funds schools £4,500 per pupil for the first 12 months after arrival and the CCG can claim £2,600 per person. The financial arrangements for the VCRS will be replicated for the new UK Resettlement Scheme.

We know the financial cost of resettlement because we have closely monitored the budget envelope for the VPRS (2016-2025). The VPRS budget envelope is for 9 years, from when the VPRS began in 2016 when the first families arrived, to 2025 when the families who arrived in 2020 will leave the scheme. The 2016-2025 budget is closely scrutinised by the Programme Board, using financial projections and the Board is confident that the tariffs offered by the Government will cover the Local authority costs for running the scheme. If the Cabinet agrees to sign up to the new UK resettlement scheme then a new 5 year budget envelope will be created. New families arriving in 2021 will be funded to 2026. If the Government decide to extend the UK Resettlement Scheme into 2022 and 2023 for arrivals, then the budget envelope will be longer.

The resettled refugees are entitled to work, receive benefits and receive health care for five years after their arrival in the country, therefore living costs are not covered by the local authority. The local authority provides the resettled refugee families with private rented sector housing for the five years they are on the scheme. 90 resettled refugee households live in the private rent sector and five now live in social housing.

Secondary school places are at a premium in Bristol in 2021 and the scheme will put additional pressures on school numbers. If 15 families are resettled each year, there could be 15 secondary school age children needing a school place each year, therefore the numbers are not insurmountable.

A City of Sanctuary

Bristol has a strong record of welcoming refugees; from Jewish refugees and refugees from the Spanish Civil war in the 1930s, to Somali refugees in 2000s. Bristol has also been a keen supporter of organised resettlement programmes, including the Vietnamese boat people in 1970s who settled in Southmead, Kosovan Refugees on an organised resettlement programme in 1980s. This Home Office funded Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Programme enables the city to demonstrate a culture of hospitality for those in need of safety. Across Bristol and in our many different neighbourhoods, residents are working to build communities and secure futures for all of us and our children. We celebrate that it is this hard work that makes us a caring and vibrant city which is greater than the sum of its parts. We also recognise that sharing, taking care of each other, and giving people the support we all need and a home to go to will make a great city even better.

We recognise that Bristol has a housing problem. The momentum of the housing market is changing – there is more house building, more partnerships with the private renting sector (PRS) and more proactive work to prevent homelessness. The VPRS encourages informal landlords to offer their homes at an affordable rent and the housing support offered by the Syrian Resettlement Team encourages them to do so. The Syrian Resettlement Team has also worked with five homeowners contacted through the Empty Homes register to renovate their properties and rent these through the VPRS.

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

1. Approves the target to resettle at least 15 families or 80 people a year under the Government's UK Resettlement Scheme's arrivals in 2021-22.
2. Approves the target to resettle at least 15 families or 80 people a year if the Government extends the UK Resettlement Schemes for new arrivals in from 2022-25.
3. Authorises the Executive Director People in consultation with the Cabinet Member Adult Social Care to implement the Bristol Resettlement scheme at a cost of £1.6m in 2021-22 which is fully funded by the Home Office Grant.
4. Authorise, subject to the extension of the UK Resettlement Schemes for new arrivals from 2022-25 and full funding by the Home Office Grant, the Executive Director People in consultation with the Cabinet Member Adult Social Care to implement the Bristol Resettlement scheme at a cost of £1.6m per year from 2022-25.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

Bristol became a City of Sanctuary, endorsed by the Council in 2010 and the Vulnerable Person's Scheme is part of delivering on this aspiration. It is also a key element of the delivery of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Strategy, Inclusive Cities, AMIF volunteering with young migrants and the One City Approach (to migration).

City Benefits: The city can meet its City of Sanctuary commitment in a safe and cost-effective manner. The scheme resettles refugees in a way that:

- provides long term emotional and practical support for vulnerable refugees
- secures national security and public protection
- has the wellbeing of the refugees and the welcoming communities at the centre of decision making
- delivers value for money for the Bristol tax payer

The government is making funding available to allow local authorities, healthcare providers and community sponsors to support refugees for the duration of the scheme

Consultation Details:

People Scrutiny - 27 February 2020
Health and Wellbeing Board 28 October 2020
Executive Director Meeting 13th Jan 2021
Cabinet Member Briefing 18th Jan 2021

Background Documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019>

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/resettlement-vulnerable-refugees-bristol>
<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/housing-for-business-and-professionals/the-syrian-resettlement-scheme-landlords>

Revenue Cost VPRS 2016-25	£7,880,000	Source of Revenue Funding	<i>Home Office Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme</i>
Revenue Cost UKRS 2021-22	£1.6m	Source of Revenue Funding	<i>Home Office UK Resettlement Scheme</i>
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

1. Finance Advice:

The Council currently receives approximately £20k per individual resettled from the Home Office, over a 5 year resettlement period. Additionally £4,500 is received and passported to schools for each VPRS pupil for their first year after arrival. The Council is currently supporting 77 families with a forecast grant income of c£7.8m and we expect this to be fully spent by March 2025.

Finance Business Partner: Denise Hunt 14 January 2021

2. Legal Advice:

The procurement process must be conducted in line with the 2015 Procurement Regulations and the Councils own procurement rules. Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the terms of the Home Office grant, the conduct of the procurement process and the resulting contractual arrangements.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Solicitor/Team Leader, 22 February 2021

3. Implications on IT: No impact on IT Services

IT Team Leader: Simon Oliver

4. HR Advice: The proposals in the report do not have any HR implications for Bristol City Council employees as it currently stands.

HR Partner Lorna Laing 29/1/2021

EDM Sign-off	Hugh Evans	13 Jan 2021
Cabinet Member sign-off	Helen Holland	18 Jan 2021
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	1 March 2021

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal

The outcomes from the VPRS

Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external

People Scrutiny 27 February 2020

11.Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme - for information The Report was noted.

The Commission thanked the team for their work on this important project

The Health and Wellbeing Board - 28 October 2020

10.Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health. The VPRS video was shown to the Health and Wellbeing Board as part of a presentation on the key issues of inclusion and accessibility experienced by migrants & asylum seekers & refugees.

The Chair thanked the team for the report and noted the request for a working group to be established to progress the recommendations.

Appendix D – Risk assessment - Attached

Appendix E – Equalities impact assessment of proposal - Attached

Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal - Attached