

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health
Date:	30 July 2021
Title:	Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy – Hampshire Support
Report From:	Director of Adults' Health and Care

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Director for Adults' Health and Care to authorise and manage all payments in relation to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) to enable the swift delivery of support to families by Hampshire County Council and District and Borough Council partners.

Recommendations

2. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health delegates authority to the Director of Adults' Health and Care to agree the terms of and enter into the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy funding instructions with the Home Office.
3. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health delegates authority to the Director of Adults' Health and Care to approve all payments in relation to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy programme, including by way of grants, as outlined in this report and in line with any funding instructions received from the Home Office.

Contextual information

4. Following the US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the UK made the decision to withdraw its troops from the area, with all changes due to happen between June and September 2021. As a result of this decision, there is now a risk that families who have been working closely with UK troops may be placed in danger, therefore the decision has been made to accelerate and extend an existing scheme to support and help resettle these families in the UK.
5. This programme, managed by the Home Office and supported by the Treasury, estimated that c.600 families may wish to relocate nationally, and it

is hoped that each local Housing Authority will be able to take in the region of 2 families, meaning across the Hampshire County Council geographic area, the potential impact would be between 18 and 22 families, depending on availability of housing, support and liaison key stakeholders.

6. The UK has been running a scheme to support locally employed staff (LES) in Afghanistan, often in dangerous and challenging situations, in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013. The scheme currently consists of two elements:
 - The ex-gratia scheme which will close in November 2022 and;
 - The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which launched in April 2021, reflecting the changing situation in Afghanistan and consequent risk to LES.

Both schemes are intended to support current and former LES who have worked for British Forces and to provide appropriate support that honours their service and properly reflects their work and the risks involved. Individuals resettled in the UK will have 'Exceptional Leave to Remain' upon arrival.

Finance

7. Hampshire County Council, together with District and Borough Councils and other organisations continue to work and develop a programme, however at the time of writing this report the funding agreement between Hampshire County Council and the Home Office had not yet been released. Therefore, we are working on an in-principle basis, until such time as the formal agreements are in place. Hampshire County Council will not be in a position to make any payments until such time as this funding instruction is agreed. Therefore, at this time the total funding envelope is not yet known.
8. As per the diagram included in appendix 1, funding will be allocated on a per-family basis and governed by a Funding Instruction between the Home Office and Hampshire County Council. Once this Funding Instruction is in place, we will be able to formally start to match families to properties identified by our district partners, and agree start dates based on the availability of support from the on-board support provider.
9. A proportion of the funding made available is to cover the costs of housing and daily living until such time as the families successfully apply for benefits, or find suitable employment. As the Local Housing Authorities, it is proposed that this element of the funding be passed on to the District and Borough Councils to manage. This arrangement is designed to create a consistent approach across Hampshire whilst ensuring maximum flexibility to respond to local variations in approach.
10. It is proposed that the current UKRS provider, Two Saints, extend their provision to include families under this programme. The scope of support delivered is identical to that delivered to families already supported under this

contract, and the systems and processes needed to accept, assess and support families are already in place.

11. The proposed arrangements do not represent an additional cost pressure compared to existing spend, as each matched family is funded by the Home Office. However, it must be stressed that no families can be matched until such time as the Funding Instruction between the Home Office and Hampshire County Council has been agreed.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12. Following the Equalities Impact Assessment, the impact of the proposed decision is considered to be neutral. Overall, the proposal in this paper is not considered to have a negative impact on any of the protected characteristics. At this time, we do not know the full profile of characteristics of the families until they are matched with available properties.

Climate Impact Assessment

13. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
14. An initial climate change assessment has taken place, and it is considered that the tools were not applicable because this is a financial report amending or proposing budgets for programmes and individual schemes and therefore does not require a climate change assessment.

Legal

15. Approval will be sought from the Head of Legal for the modification to the existing UKRS contract to enable the required extension of provision to families under the ARAP scheme.

Conclusions

16. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health delegates authority to the Director of Adults' Health and Care to agree the terms of and enter into the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy funding instructions with the Home Office.
17. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health delegates authority to the Director of Adults' Health and Care to approve all payments in relation to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy programme, including by way of grants, as outlined in this report and in line with any funding instructions received from the Home Office.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The UK has been running a scheme to support locally employed staff (LES) in Afghanistan, often in dangerous and challenging situations, in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013. The scheme currently consists of two elements:

- The ex-gratia scheme which will close in November 2022 and;
- The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which launched in April 2021, reflecting the changing situation in Afghanistan and consequent risk to LES.

Both schemes are intended to support current and former LES who have worked for British Forces and to provide appropriate support that honours their service

and properly reflects their work and the risks involved. The schemes provide a range of in-country packages of assistance in Afghanistan and, for those who meet the criteria, relocation to the UK with their dependants.

Following the recent US decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, the UK followed suit and is withdrawing troops between now and September 2021. This leaves families who have been working with UK troops in danger of being targeted, so the decision has been made to accelerate and extend the existing scheme to support resettlement of these families in the UK. It is hoped that each local Housing Authority will be able to take at least 2 families, meaning that the HCC constituency could consider taking in the region of 18 - 22 families, depending on availability of support and housing (as a result of liaising with the support provider and District and Borough Councils.)

Hampshire County Council has agreed to take on a coordinating role, similar to that delivered within the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) programme. The approach we are proposing would be for HCC to coordinate across its own departments and the 11 District and Borough Councils, to deliver a Hampshire-wide response to supporting this programme.

Due to the fast timescales and nature of this scheme, we have not had time to carry out any in depth consultation or engagement, or been able to yet make contact with those affected. Thus our assessment on the impacts of enabling this scheme to take place is in line with our experience of coordinating the existing UKRS programme in Hampshire. Engagement will be a key part of the holistic support package put in place for each family resettled in Hampshire, and will take into account any protected characteristics that the family may have.

Age

HCC will be responsible for ensuring that families are matched with appropriate properties, and these properties are set up suitably according to the make up of the family in terms of ages represented. In addition, as part of the holistic support package provided for each family resettled in Hampshire - all ages represented will be offered appropriate and relevant support according to their needs.

Disability

HCC will be responsible for ensuring that families are matched with appropriate properties, taking into account any accessibility requirements as part of this decision process. In addition, as part of the holistic support package provided for each family resettled in Hampshire - any needs relating to disability will be supported appropriately.

Gender Reassignment

We do not expect the decision to support this scheme to have a significant impact on this characteristic either way. But where people within this protected

characteristic group are identified they will be supported appropriately as part of the holistic support package.

Pregnancy & Maternity

HCC will be responsible for ensuring that families are matched with appropriate properties, and these properties are set up suitably according to the make up of the family in terms of any family members that have very young children, or are pregnant. In addition, as part of the holistic support package provided for each family resettled in Hampshire - all family members will be offered appropriate and relevant support according to their needs.

Race

As part of the holistic support package provided for each family resettled in Hampshire - race and any cultural implications will be taken into account to ensure the most appropriate and suitable support is offered.

Religion or Belief

As part of the holistic support package provided for each family resettled in Hampshire - religion and any beliefs will be taken into account to ensure the most appropriate and suitable support is offered.

Sex

As part of the holistic support package provided for each family resettled in Hampshire - and needs/ requirement relating to the individual's sex will be taken into account to ensure the most appropriate and suitable support is offered.

Sexual Orientation

We do not expect the decision to support this scheme to have a significant impact on this characteristic either way. But where people within this protected characteristic group are identified they will be supported appropriately as part of the holistic support package.

Marriage & Civil Partnership

HCC will be responsible for ensuring that families are matched with appropriate properties, and these properties are set up suitably according to the make up of the family, and whether there are any individuals that are married or in a civil partnership. In addition, as part of the holistic support package provided for each family resettled in Hampshire - all individuals will be offered appropriate and relevant support according to their needs and requirements.

Poverty

As part of the holistic support package families will be supported in a number of ways relating to impacting this characteristic positively, e.g.:

- Adults will be supported to access vocational courses, leading to qualifications, where appropriate
- Adults will be supported to access Job Centre Plus and other organisations/opportunities that support them to secure employment
- Adults will be supported to manage their finances and understand the consequences of not meeting essential payments (e.g. rent).
- All household members will be supported to know of and feel confident to access relevant local community resources
- Families will be supported to apply for the appropriate benefits.

In addition, for the first 4 months, or up until the family are in receipt of benefits - families will receive cash support to cover living costs (provided as part of the scheme's funding instruction).

Rurality

We do not expect the decision to support this scheme to have a significant impact on people within this protected characteristic group either way. Where a family is resettled into a property in a rural area, appropriate support in terms of accessing services and transport will be provided as part of the holistic support package.

Geographical Impact

The Proposed service will impact all of Hampshire.

Please note, there are all anticipated impacts bases on HCC's experience of coordinating the UKRS programme. Any demographic / diversity data on the individuals and families involved in this scheme in particular will only be made available to us further down the line.

We will be working closely with the contracted support provider, and other relevant parties (e.g. District and Borough Councils) to ensure that the support offered to these families is appropriate and meets the holistic needs of the individuals involved.

Proposed Finance and Information Flow

