

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health
Date:	21 October 2021
Title:	Refugee Resettlement and Support Contract Extension
Report From:	Director of Adults' Health and Care

Contact name: Stephen White

Tel: 0370 779 3186

Email: Stephen.White@hants.gov.uk

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the extension of the Refugee Resettlement and Support Service Contract and associated spend for a period of 9 months.

Recommendations

2. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health give approval to modify the Refugee Resettlement and support service contract by extending it as outlined in the report, for a period of 9 months to end November 2022.
3. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health approves the associated spend of up to £354,424 which would take the aggregated contract value between 2018 to 2022 up to a maximum of £1,352,924.

Contextual information

4. The Refugee Resettlement and Support service was originally established to provide and coordinate resettlement and integration support for refugees relocating to Hampshire, primarily under the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Relocation Scheme (VCRS). These schemes were later consolidated to a UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), replacing VPRS and other existing resettlement programmes from April 2020.
5. The service aimed to provide immediate assistance to beneficiaries upon their arrival in the UK. The service supported with settling into accommodation, administrative processes and helped to coordinate and assist with the beneficiaries' integration into the local community. For those arriving under the UKRS scheme, the service also provided intensive casework support for the first 3 years of a family's 5-year resettlement

journey, as well as providing continued support for some families in years 4 and 5 by agreement.

6. The existing contract commenced in 2018 to provide support to these families. However, following the US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, approval was given to make a modification to the Refugee Resettlement & Support Service contract to accept and extend the support offered further to include up to 22 families entering the UK via the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (ALES) programme. These are families who worked for the UK Government in Afghanistan, including many who worked as interpreters for UK forces in the country, and who are eligible for expedited relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), part of the ALES
7. Since then, the progress of evacuation from Afghanistan has significantly increased as a result of changes and instability. The Home Office, alongside the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), announced changes to both the funding arrangements and rights and status of individuals evacuated under this programme. They also introduced a new Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). Therefore, further consideration was given to increase the number of families the Hampshire system would look to support from 22, to 35, and to include the acceptance of individuals relocating under the ACRS programme. The programme is being delivered in partnership between Hampshire County Council, the 11 district and borough councils as well as the support provider and voluntary sector.
8. The current support provider contract is due to expire on 28 February 2022. The County Council had prepared and were looking to re-tender the service. However, we could not reasonably foresee the US withdrawal of troops or the pace of change that followed that decision, leading to the increased levels of support needed. Given the high level of uncertainty regarding funding arrangements at this time and specific requirements of the programme, including the Home Office's recent changes to the programme (as outlined above), it is considered that it would not be possible to tender for these services at this time. Delaying a tender process until the UKRS, ARAP and ACRS pathways, and the interactions between them, are better defined as well as waiting until this initial emergency period is concluded, would result in a service that was more able to be fit for the future.
9. In addition, initial market engagement had taken place which had shown the market is very limited. Early market engagement has led to it being considered that the market is not operationally in a position to be looking to apply for tendered services, due to the current and ongoing emergency response to Afghan resettlement. Due to the short term nature of the proposed modification to this contract, it is further considered that providers are unlikely to wish to tender for a service over this timeframe. The market is aware of the County Councils intention to tender these services in the future.

10. There is an urgent need to ensure a sufficient level of appropriately trained and suitable staff are available to support families under these programmes and to ensure families can be accepted quickly. In order to progress this recruitment, the current provider is seeking re-assurance of future contractual arrangements to ensure an attractive employment term.
11. Due to the above reasons there is a need to extend the existing contract, ensuring that it covers all individuals resettling under the existing approved schemes. We are seeking a 9-month extension to take the service through to 30 November 2022 in order to give time for the service to be re-assessed and re-tendered as a whole, securing future funding arrangements and ensuring future services are fit for purpose.

Finance

12. The Refugee Resettlement and Support Service contract operates on a multiple payments system. The annual retainer covers the coordination and support costs for up to 10 new households arriving in any one contract year. Further payments are then given for support hours delivered to families who are in their second or third year of resettlement as well as a one-off personalisation payment to support initial resettlement expenses such as the cost of English as a Second Or foreign Language (ESOL) courses or interpreters for meetings.
13. The Home Office is responsible for supporting and providing the funding for those individuals entering and settling within Hampshire, regardless of which route this is through. However, while the County Council is operating under funding instructions from the Home Office, at the time of writing this report updated funding instructions that reflect the changes to the programme, recently announced by the Home Office, have not been released. Therefore, we are working on an in-principle basis, under the existing funding instruction arrangements, which we believe entitles us to recover all additional costs, until such time as the formal agreements are in place.
14. At this time, whilst the precise total funding envelope from the Home Office is not yet known, it is expected to include a sufficient allocation for support costs to offset the £354,424 for the 9 months of the proposed extension period.
15. Funding for those entering under the ARAP or ACRS schemes, 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.
16. Funding for those entering through the UKRS programme is also on a per-family basis and will continue under the existing funding instruction between the Home Office and Hampshire County council.

17. Where the proposed arrangements do represent an additional cost compared to existing spend, it is anticipated this will be mitigated through, at least commensurate additional income funded by the Home Office.

Equalities Impact Assessment

18. Following the initial Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken at the time the contract was extended to include 22 Afghan evacuee families, the impact was 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

19. 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.
20. An initial climate change impact 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

21. Legal advice is set out in exempt appendix 1.

Conclusions

22. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health give approval to modify the Refugee Resettlement and support service contract by extending it as outlined in the report, for a period of 9 months to end November 2022.
23. That the Executive Member for Adult Services and Public Health approves the associated spend of up to £354,424 which would take the aggregated contract value between 2018 to 2022 up to a maximum of £1,352,924.

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> Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy – Hampshire Support	<u>Date</u> 30 July 2021
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:

Hampshire County Council has a coordinating role for the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) programme. It has also been agreed that Hampshire County Council will undertake the same approach to coordinate across its own departments and the 11 District and Borough Councils, to deliver a Hampshire-wide response to supporting the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

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 all schemes will 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.