

<b>Council</b>			
<b>Title</b>	Resettlement of Syrian Refugee Households		
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	<b>Item no</b>	
<b>Wards</b>	All		
<b>Contributors</b>	Executive Director for Customer Services		
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	21 September 2016	

## **1 Summary**

- 1.1 In 2015 the Government pledged to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK over the course of this parliamentary period. Progress is being made nationally in meeting this target by the end of March 2016 2,400 Syrians had been resettled in the UK across 71 local authorities under the Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPR), and to date 50 households have been resettled in London. It is currently estimated that pledges have been made nationwide to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees.
- 1.2 In response to the Prime Minister's announcement the Mayor of Lewisham published a statement confirming the council's commitment to preparing for and receiving Syrian Refugees. Lewisham is an ethnically diverse borough and has experienced many waves of migration. Roughly half of Lewisham's population is Black or Minority Ethnic making it a borough with experience of accommodating the cultural needs of diverse groups.
- 1.3 The Government has put in place a funding offer to local authorities that contributes towards the costs of delivering support and other services to refugee households. The Home Office have set standard financial support rates for each eligible beneficiary, funding is also available to cover the cost of educational needs of children and additional funding may be available for those with additional health, care and educational needs. All resettled refugees are granted five years Humanitarian Protection Status and have access to public funds and the labour market. The Government has indicated that at the end of the five years, households will be eligible to apply for permanent residence in the UK.
- 1.4 This report seeks approval for the resettlement of up to 10 Syrian refugee households initially in Lewisham and for coordination of tendering and appointing associated resettlement support services.

## **2 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To inform Full Council of the resettlement of up to 10 Syrian refugee households

in Lewisham

2.2 To outline the proposed Lewisham Syrian Refugee Offer on resettlement and support

2.3 To recommend the tendering and appointment of resettlement and support services

### **3 Recommendation**

It is recommended that Full Council

3.1 Notes that the Council is responding to the ongoing humanitarian crisis caused by conflict in Syria by resettling up to 10 Syrian refugee households in Lewisham.

3.2 Notes the outline timetable for receiving the first households and overall participation in the Syria Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme.

3.3 Notes that the Lewisham Syrian Refugee Offer at Appendix 1 sets out that accommodation will be procured from the private rented sector, the local community and/or voluntary sector agencies to accommodate Syrian refugees.

3.4 Notes that the Lewisham Syrian Refugee Offer proposes the tendering and appointment of a support resettlement service.

3.5 Notes the approved the Syrian Refugee Offer attached at Appendix 1.

3.6 Notes the delegated responsibility to the Executive Director for Customer Services to enter into a formal agreement with the Home Office to resettle up to 10 Syrian refugee households in Lewisham

3.7 Notes the agreed budgetary provision of £50,000 for contingency costs and administration of the Lewisham Refugee Offer

### **4 Background**

4.1 Conflict in Syria began over 5 years ago and continues today with no signs of imminent resolution. Since the conflict began in March 2011 more than 250,000 Syrian people, predominantly civilians have been killed. It is estimated that over 4.5 million Syrian people have fled the country since the start of the conflict, one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history. In September 2015 the Prime Minister announced that the UK Government would resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 under the Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme, known as the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP). As of March 2016 just over 2400 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the UK, and 50 of these households have been resettled in London.

4.2 The SRP involves central government working with United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) to identify the most vulnerable Syrian refugees who have already fled Syria and sought temporary refuge in a neighbouring country. The SRP is based on a household's needs, and prioritises the resettlement of

those who cannot be supported effectively in their temporary host country and who are unable to return to Syria. The Home Office will carry out medical and security checks and then route cases to participating local authorities, to either accept or reject.

- 4.3 The Government has committed to provide funding to contribute towards covering the costs of resettling refugees in the UK from the international aid budget. At the 2015 spending review the Chancellor announced the provision of an estimated £460 million over the spending review period to cover the first 12 months' costs under the scheme. The Government has committed a further £129 million to assist with local authority costs over years 2-5 of the scheme. Further funding will be available for "extreme" high cost cases where there is a severe disability or care need. Syrian Refugees are given Humanitarian Protection status for 5 years under the SRP and are entitled to work and claim welfare benefits.
- 4.4 In order to ensure the effective integration of resettled Syrian refugees, local authorities wanting to participate in the SRP need to be able to meet the Home Office's Statement of Outcomes for the programme which includes:
- Meeting and greeting refugees as they arrive at airports, escorting them to properties and briefing them on the use of amenities
  - The provision of suitable, affordable and sustainable accommodation which meets the local authority's standards and is available for at least one year. Accommodation is to be basically furnished and supplied with essential white goods
  - Welcome packs on arrival including basic groceries, clothing and a £200 cash payment per eligible household member
  - The provision of a case work support service to signpost and coordinate education, welfare claims, employment and other integration services set out in individual "personalised support plans"
  - Access to ESOL courses and translation services

## **5 London Context**

- 5.1 London Councils and the GLA have been in discussions with Government regarding concerns that the current funding settlement for the SRP will not meet the accommodation, support and living costs of resettled households in London despite recourse to public funds. There has been no confirmation to date of any additional funding for London.
- 5.2 London has a proud history of providing refuge to those seeking sanctuary but faces a unique set of challenges when considering resettling Syrian refugees. London is a multicultural city where cultural diversity thrives and would be able to meet the social and cultural needs of Syrian refugees; however, due to chronic shortages of housing, London boroughs already struggle to find affordable accommodation for those currently in housing need. 50,000 homeless households are currently living in temporary accommodation predominantly in the private rented sector (PRS) across London.
- 5.3 The Home Office has indicated that accommodation sought for Syrian refugees

should be at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates; in London the majority of PRS rents are above LHA. The number of 2 bedroom properties available to rent in Lewisham at LHA in the PRS decreased from 18 in November 2015 to 8 in May 2016, a pattern which is reflected across property sizes in the borough. In addition to the lack of affordable accommodation, caps to welfare benefits make it increasingly unaffordable for large families requiring 3 or more bedrooms to live in London. In response to this, the Home Office has agreed with the UNHCR to re-model the cohort profile of Syrian refugees so that London resettles smaller families and people with more complex needs.

- 5.4 The Home Office has suggested that 2,500 households are resettled in London. So far in London, 50 households have been resettled by the boroughs of Islington, Barnet, Kingston, Hackney, Lambeth, Camden and Kensington and Chelsea. Accommodation has been provided in the private rented sector with a growing number of properties offered through Citizens UK and other voluntary sector groups.

## 6 Lewisham’s Offer

Councillor Kevin Bonavia, Cabinet Member for Resources, has been given special responsibility to lead on the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Lewisham and has been liaising with Lewisham community groups in order to develop an achievable outcome. On 13 July 2016, the Council hosted an event for Lewisham community groups to address the issue of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Lewisham. The event looked at current practice in working with refugees in Lewisham and the experience of the London Boroughs of Islington and Tower Hamlets as well as the support available from the local voluntary and community sector. At the meeting it was agreed that a Lewisham Syrian Refugee Offer would be developed and that voluntary sector and community sector offers of support and sharing of information would be coordinated through the development of a Directory.

- 6.1 Lewisham would like to put in place arrangements to initially resettle up to 10 Syrian households. Lewisham will develop a Syrian Refugee Offer Policy in line with current guidance provided by the Government and will work in partnership with local community groups, the GLA and other London boroughs participating in the SRP. The detail of the outline offer is contained at Appendix 1.
- 6.2 The outline timetable for accepting and resettling cases is set out below. Once a household is accepted, then it is typically 6-8 weeks before their arrival. Coordination support and commissioned support services need to be in place ahead of arrival in the UK.

Time Table for Lewisham Syrian Refugee Resettlement	
Date	Activity
September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enter into formal agreement with the Home Office post Full Council meeting</li> <li>• Establish a multi-agency support panel (including housing, health, DWP, education, resettlement, support service provider and other third sector agencies)</li> </ul>

October – December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procure resettlement services</li> <li>• Work with the Voluntary Sector, Landlords and agencies known to the Council to identify suitable accommodation at LHA rates</li> </ul>
January – March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree households with the Home Office</li> <li>• Begin accepting Syrian refugee households</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Accommodation

Accommodation for Syrian refugees in Lewisham will be sourced from the PRS and from offers of community support in line with the approach of other participating London boroughs. There are currently just under 1,800 homeless households in temporary accommodation in Lewisham, 400 of which are placed in accommodation outside of the borough. All London boroughs who have accepted Syrian refugees as part of the SRP to date have accommodated households in PRS accommodation rather than social housing. High demands on social housing from homeless families waiting in temporary accommodation for many years and the limited 5 year Humanitarian Protection Status awarded to Syrian refugees makes PRS the most appropriate offer of accommodation in London. For Syrian refugees resettled in London, PRS accommodation is likely to be their long term housing option if permanent residency is sought beyond their initial 5 year Humanitarian Protection Status. By placing Syrian households in the PRS from the onset, families will be better able to manage and sustain their accommodation independently in the long term.

6.4 There is a significant gap between the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) entitlement payable to welfare benefit claimants and the market rents charged in the PRS in Lewisham. Shortfalls in accommodation costs for Syrian refugees would need to either be paid for through the local authority settlement received for the household, reducing the amount available to spend on support, or through the council's existing DHP budget or general fund sources. The table below illustrates the difference between market rents and LHA in Lewisham.

	<b>1 Bed</b>	<b>2 Bed</b>	<b>3 Bed</b>	<b>4 Bed</b>
Median Weekly Rent - Lewisham	£252	£300	£386	£462
LHA Rate - Inner SE London	£204	£265	£331	£417
LHA Rate - Outer SE London	£161	£198	£242	£313

6.5 In addition to LHA restrictions from the 7<sup>th</sup> of November the benefit cap will be reduced to £442.31 per week for couples with children in London. LHA for a 4 bedroom property in parts of Lewisham in the Inner South East London area is £417 per week, making larger properties unaffordable for households dependant on welfare benefits. In order to access affordable PRS accommodation it is recommended that Lewisham council accommodate households with no more than a 3 bedroom need.

6.6 The Home Office has categorised households into needs groups and is asking local authorities to indicate the category of household they are able to accommodate in their borough. The categories of household are as follows:

Category	Household Type
1	Non-complex Case: those with no special needs or requirements
2A	Mobility Issues: people who are wheelchair users or who have other disabilities including missing limbs or those who have restricted movement
2B	Serious Medical: people who require surgery or ongoing medical treatment for life threatening conditions (e.g. cancer, dialysis)
2C	Psychological: people suffering from mental illness or those where a need for immediate psychological support is specified in the HAP
2D	Special Educational Needs: children with disabilities or learning difficulties
3	Large Families: family groups made up of 7 or more people

6.7 Dependant on the type of properties procured Lewisham is proposing to accommodate households in all categories except category 3 due to difficulties in procuring large family properties at LHA in the borough.

6.8 Lewisham's agreement with Government means the Council will be responsible for the resettlement of Syrian refugee households in the borough.

6.9 Issues of affordability of PRS accommodation in Lewisham mean that it is necessary to harness increased levels of community compassion when sourcing accommodation for Syrian refugee households. Offers of accommodation from the local voluntary and community sector have already been made to Lewisham and will be assessed for suitability. Any offer of accommodation from the local community needs to be independent, self-contained, available to rent at LHA or below and meet with the suitability standards of both the local authority and the Home Office.

#### 6.10 Resettlement support

In order to meet the Government requirements for resettling Syrian refugees in Lewisham the Council must provide a meet-and-greet service for new refugees and ongoing integration, housing, care and educational support for a period of at least 12 months.. It is thought that initial intensive support will be required, but that support will taper as households become more integrated into the local community. In order to provide both initial and ongoing support to Syrian refugees, the Council will need to develop a service specification, put out to tender and commission support services. Additional resources may also be needed to ensure ESOL provision meets a household's integration needs.

6.11 Lewisham has an active and engaged voluntary and community sector willing to

support the integration of Syrian households resettled in Lewisham. A directory of support is being developed to manage offers of support and donations from the local community. The Council will be responsible for coordinating support from the local community and voluntary sector, ensuring that wherever possible additional resettlement needs are met through the local community. On the 19<sup>th</sup> July the Government launched a Community Sponsorship Scheme with a digital register for people who wish to offer donations such as cooking equipment or brown goods. This service may also help coordinate local community donations.

## 6.12 Beyond Year 5

Syrian Refugee households accommodated under the SRP will be granted Humanitarian Protection Status for 5 years, at the end of this period they will be entitled to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (IDLR). High needs households may be less likely to access the labour market and become self-sustaining in the 5 year period. If their application for IDLR is refused then there is a risk that households will have no recourse to public funds, resulting in additional costs to the council.

## 7 Equality Impact Analysis

- 7.1 The main impacts identified are that the SRP in Lewisham will have a positive equality impact primarily on BME communities, as all refugees being resettled will be from BME backgrounds. The SRP will offer those who are resettled the only chance of a durable solution to their protracted situation. Refugees may also have other protected characteristics, which may be relevant to their resettlement need, and this would be addressed as part of the individualised support they receive, for example, some of the refugees who are resettled may have suffered persecution on the basis of their sexuality or religion.

## 8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Government has set aside a basic amount of just over £20,000 in resettlement funding per household member across 5 years to be paid directly to local authorities. The following table shows the profile of the funding over the five years. Funding will be tapered from year one reducing to £1,000 in year 5 of the resettlement programme. Local authorities will be free to decide how best to use the funding in years 2-5.

Syrian Resettlement Programme – Local Authority Settlement Years 1-5						
Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Funding Per Person	£8,520	£5,000	£3,700	£2,300	£1,000	£20,520

- 8.2 In year one, funding will be made to local authorities throughout the first 12 month period in arrears after a household has been accepted with 40% of expected yearly costs for each individual to be authorised on the day of arrival and paid to

the Council within 30 days. The remainder will be paid in arrears in two equal instalments at the end of the fourth and eighth month. This funding covers a range of expenditure including the following

- any shortfall between rent charged and Local Housing Allowance
- furniture, white goods, soft furnishings
- initial cash payment and grocery welcome pack
- Local authority coordination, finance and administration
- Caseworker
- English as a second language (ESOL) tuition/support costs

8.3 In addition to the basic amount of funding per individual household member, there will also be additional funding for education costs for children as set out in the following table. The funding is provided in the first year only for children aged between 5 and 18 years old (£4,500) and for children aged 3 to 4 years old (£2,250). This will be paid to the local authority and passed on to schools and is above the funding provided to schools per pupil by the Department of Education. Additional funding is also available for exceptional circumstances or “high cost cases” for educational purposes for children under the age of 18 on a case-by-case basis.

Syrian Resettlement Programme - Local Authority Settlement 2016/17					
Local Authority Costs	Adult Benefit Claimant	Other Adults	Children 5-18	Children 3-4	Children under 3
	£8,520	£8,520	£8,520	£8,520	£8,520
Education	£0.00	£0.00	£4,500	£2,250	£0.00
Total	£8,520	£8,520	£13,020	£10,770	£8,520

#### 8.4 Funding for Social Care

The Home Office have advised that there is additional funding available for “high cost cases” where there are compelling circumstances that require additional social care costs. These costs can be requested on a case by case basis and will be assessed individually by the Home Office. Information on funding levels and demand for additional funding is not yet available. Individuals granted Humanitarian Protection Status are not able to claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability benefits for the first two years of residency.

#### 8.5 Funding for Primary and Secondary Medical Care

Funding for primary and secondary care will be paid directly to local CCG by the Government. CCG’s will need to apply for medical care costs per household and can claim £600 per person for primary medical care costs and £2000 per person for Secondary care costs.

#### 8.6 Overall Funding

Initial modelling suggests that, with careful budgeting and control of costs, the



funding available may cover the indicative set-up costs of the families; however, the modelling is at a very early stage and so, in order to allow for some flexibility and ensure a successful start, a sum of £50,000 will be held in reserve as a contingency to cover additional costs should they arise.

## 9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Participation in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) is voluntary and is a matter for decision by each local authority. The Home Office has issued clear requirements of authorities which decide to contribute to the programme, and any Local Authority which agrees to resettle refugees under the SVPRS must satisfy the Home Office that they have the relevant services and infrastructure in place.
- 9.2 There is no statutory duty for the Council to participate in the resettlement programme although mandatory quotas could be introduced, for example through the Immigration Bill 2015/2016, in the event there are not enough places available nationally.
- 9.3 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 9.4 In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 9.5 The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.
- 9.6 The Equality and Human Rights Commission issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and->

[policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/)

9.7 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

1. The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
2. Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
3. Engagement and the equality duty
4. Equality objectives and the equality duty
5. Equality information and the equality duty

9.8 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

## **10 Crime and Disorder Implications**

10.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **11 Environmental Implications**

11.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

## **12 Background documents and originator**

12.1 Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme, Guidance for local authorities and partners, The Home Office, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015  
<http://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2016/aug/22/call-for-evidence-homelessness-prevention>

12.2 Syrian Refugee Resettlement, A guide for local authorities, LGA & Migration Yorkshire, Spring 2016  
[http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/1.11\\_resettlement\\_guide\\_08.pdf/cc6c7b51-23a8-4621-b95c-a30bc3da438e](http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/1.11_resettlement_guide_08.pdf/cc6c7b51-23a8-4621-b95c-a30bc3da438e)

12.3 If you would like any further information on this report please contact Genevieve Macklin (020 8314 6057) or Nicola Marven (020 8314 7227)

## APPENDIX 1.

### The Lewisham Offer for Syrian Refugee Resettlement

The London Borough of Lewisham will work with Government, the GLA, local authorities and a range of partners, voluntary sector agencies and the local community to resettle up to (at least initially) 10 Syrian refugee households.

In order to realise this outcome, Lewisham makes the following commitments by way of an offer to:

- (1) the Government for the purpose of seeking its agreement to the proposed resettlement of Syrian refugees in the borough; and
- (2) the community across the borough for the purpose of locating suitable accommodation for refugee households and support to integrate individual refugees into society.

#### Timescales

Lewisham aims to accept the first Syrian refugee households between January and March 2017 in accordance with the below outlined time table:

Time Table for Lewisham Syrian Refugee Resettlement	
Date	Activity
September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enter into formal agreement with the Home Office post Full Council meeting</li><li>• Establish a multi-agency support panel (including housing, health, DWP, education, resettlement, support service provider and other third sector agencies)</li></ul>
October – December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procure resettlement services</li><li>• Work with the Voluntary Sector, Landlords and agencies known to the Council to identify suitable accommodation at LHA rates</li></ul>
January – March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree households with the Home Office</li><li>• Begin accepting Syrian refugee households</li></ul>

#### Household categories

Lewisham will work with the Home Office to accommodate households in categories 1, 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D as outlined by the Home Office as follows:

Home Office Syrian Refugee Household Categories	
Category	Household Type
1	Non-complex Case: those with no special needs or requirements
2A	Mobility Issues: people who are wheelchair users or who have other disabilities including missing limbs or those who have restricted movement

2B	Serious Medical: people who require surgery or ongoing medical treatment for life threatening conditions (e.g. cancer, dialysis)
2C	Psychological: people suffering from mental illness or those where a need for immediate psychological support is specified in the HAP
2D	Special Educational Needs: children with disabilities or learning difficulties
3	Large Families: family groups made up of 7 or more people

### **Accommodation**

Lewisham will procure 2 or 3 bed units of accommodation at LHA rate or lower from the private rented sector or as identified through the local community and voluntary sector.

Properties procured for the purpose of resettling Syrian refugee households will be appropriately furnished with essential items and white goods

### **Resettlement Support**

Lewisham will commission meet and greet and ongoing integration casework and resettlement support. Support will be provided to households for a period of 12 months from arrival.

### **Education**

Lewisham will ensure that school places are available at the time of refugee arrival, school places will be accessed via normal admissions processes and will be chosen in line with the proximity to sourced accommodation

Lewisham will ensure refugee households are assessed on their English language ability and that accredited English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses are available

### **Health**

Lewisham will ensure Syrian refugees are registered with local health services and facilitate access to specialist health services as required

### **Translation**

Lewisham will ensure interpreting and translation services are available to Syrian Refugees

### **Community Integration Activities**

Lewisham will work with the local voluntary sector and community to provide activities to Syrian refugee households that promote integration