

## OVERVIEW OF RESETTLEMENT SERVICES

Meeting: **Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee**

Date Of Meeting: **21 January 2025**

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Will the decision be open for call in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Resettlement Services offered by Woking Borough Council and to provide an opportunity to scrutinise the actions being taken. The desired outcome is that through scrutiny and oversight, residents and the committee will have an understanding of the services provided by the Resettlement Team.

### 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

#### **RESOLVE THAT**

i. **The report be noted.**

### 3.0 Proposal and Outcome

3.1 The Committee is invited to note an overview of the Resettlement Services offered by Woking Borough Council.

3.2 The desired outcome is that through scrutiny and oversight, residents and the Committee will have an understanding of the services provided through the three different Resettlement Schemes.

### 4.0 Background

4.1 The Resettlement Service supports Refugees that have arrived in the UK under the following schemes:

- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- Homes for Ukraine
- Syrian vulnerable resettlement (VPR) programme

4.2 ARAP scheme launched on 1 April 2021 by the UK Government to support individuals and their families to be relocated to the UK who were employed in Afghanistan directly by the UK Government and at risk from the Taliban. The scheme provides funding for 3 years following their arrival into settled accommodation. Individuals on the scheme are given indefinite leave to remain. ARAP remains open with Afghan refugees continuing to arrive in the UK.

4.3 Homes for Ukraine scheme is a UK Government program which started in March 2022. It enables UK citizens to sponsor Ukrainian nationals visa and host them for at least 6 months. Ukrainian nationals must have lived in Ukraine before 1 January 2022 to be eligible. The aim is to provide a route to safety for individuals and families escaping the war in Ukraine. Guests were initially given an 18-month visa upon arrival to the UK called the Ukraine visa scheme. Due to the continued conflict in the Ukraine, visas were extended for another 18 months in 2024 and as of 4 February 2025, Ukrainian guests will be invited to apply for the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE). This will grant another 18 months visa to stay in the UK. Homes for Ukraine remains open with Ukrainian refugees still arriving in the UK.

4.4 VPR programme began in January 2014 by the UK Government who worked closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was agreed to bring to the UK 20,000 of the most at risk people who required urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture as well as women and children. VPR provided funding for 5 years. Individuals arriving to the UK were issued with Biometric Residency Permits and on finishing their 5 years of support, they were helped to complete Indefinite Leave to Remain. The VPR scheme closed in May 2020.

### 5.0 Options Considered

5.1 This report is an overview of existing activity and progress. As such, there are no alternative options put forward for consideration.

### 6.0 Process

6.1 The ARAP and VPR resettlement and integration aims are to provide access to;

- Housing
- Education
- Financial independence (including bank accounts and access to benefits)
- Medical healthcare (including mental health) and any specialist trauma related support.
- Employment and/or volunteering opportunities
- Ability to access English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Community opportunities
- And to support or signpost for any additional support needs

6.2 The Homes for Ukraine aims are to support guests and hosts who have entered the scheme. The Resettlement Team key support provided are;

- Issuing thank you payments to hosts
- Conducting property inspections
- Supporting with re-matching between hosts and guests
- Homeless presentations and hosting advice
- Access to ESOL
- Issues arising with benefits or finances
- Employment, volunteering and education opportunities
- And to support or signpost with any additional support needs including safeguarding

6.3 Support and signposting is given directly through members of the Resettlement Team via some of the following ways but not including all; drop-in services, attending home and community visits as well as appointments, liaising on behalf of refugees with partner agencies and raising any safeguarding alerts should they arise.

6.4 ARAP and VPR refugees are/were provided with furnished properties and a grocery shop upon arrival in the UK, some were met at the airport and others on arrival to their property via UK Government organised travel.

6.5 Additional support is provided through the following partnership agencies who have Service Level Agreements with the Resettlement Team:

- Citizens Advice Woking (benefits and legal advice)
- Woking College (provide ESOL lessons)
- The Lighthouse Project (Host the Ukrainian Hub)
- Surrey Care Trust (Funded an employability advisor post - this ended and was not renewed in September 2024)

6.6 The Resettlement Team also work closely with the Woking Job Centre and Woking Borough Council Housing Department, as well as the Benefits and Council Tax Team.

### 7.0 Progress Update

7.1 Below is the total number of individuals/families who have arrived in Woking and have been supported by the Resettlement Team:

- 10 families, totalling 61 people have been resettled into Woking through the ARAP scheme.
- 515 Homes for Ukraine refugees have arrived in Woking.
- 50 UNHCR referrals to Woking, equating to a total of 160 Syrian Refugees.
- Since arriving in the UK, some of the families have had children who have also been supported by the Resettlement Team.

7.2 Alongside the resettlement support and key targets the team has to reach, it has also hosted a number of community events, wellbeing workshops and employability courses to encourage families to integrate into the local community. A total of 197 people attended these opportunities in 2024.

7.3 100% of all ARAP refugees resettled in Woking are;

- Enrolled in school and nursery or on the waiting list.
- Registered with GP and Dentist.
- Have signed tenancies.
- Have enrolled in ESOL.
- Have a bank account and access to benefits.
- 55% of ARAP adults eligible to work are in employment.

7.4 Regarding Homes for Ukraine between April-December 2024;

- There have been 13 homeless prevention cases.
- 5 families prevented or ended staying in temporary/emergency accommodation through accessing the Homes for Ukraine rent in advance scheme.
- 1869 Ukrainian refugees have accessed the Ukraine Hub at the Lighthouse.
- 357 Ukrainian refugees have attended the Resettlement drop in hosted at the hub.
- 49 cases including families have been provided with housing advice.
- 40 cases including families have been supported to move into private rented accommodation through this advice.
- 566 Thank you Payments have been issued to hosts.
- In December 2024, there were 57 Hosts who received Thank you Payments, 43 of whom have hosted for over 1 year.
- As of 6 January 2025, there were 0 Homes for Ukraine refugees in emergency accommodation at risk of homelessness.

7.5 100% VRP refugees have completed their Indefinite Leave to Remain as part of their 5 years completion.

7.6 Between June-December 2024 230 families have been supported by Citizens Advice Woking.

## Overview of Resettlement Services

7.7 From April-July 2024, 54 refugees supported by the Resettlement Team engaged with the employability advisor at Surrey Care Trust.

7.8 As of December 2024, overall attendance was 83.5% for the ESOL community course funded by the Resettlement Team and delivered by Woking College.

### 8.0 Implications

#### Legal

8.1 None arising from this report.

#### Resources (including finance)

8.2 The Resettlement Services are externally funded.

8.3 As outlined by the UK Government guidance regarding the Homes for Ukraine scheme; "The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) makes quarterly payments to councils, in arrears. On 30 June 2022, MHCLG made the first payment to councils to cover the months March to May".

8.4 Payments are based on the actual number of Homes for Ukraine guests for the tariff and the actual number of 'thank you' payments to sponsoring households within each area and are adjusted to account for ratified rematches between local authorities and devolved administrations" (UK Gov 2024). These payments are made directly to Surrey County Council, who make prompt payments to the District Boroughs in Surrey, including Woking.

8.5 The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was funded by central government. The payments were received over 5 years and based on a tariff per individual that has arrived.

8.6 Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme & Relocation and Assistance Policy is funded by central government. Payments are received over 3 years and based on a tariff per individual that arrives.

8.7 Below is the amount in reserves of the 3 schemes as of 24 December 2024:

- ARAP £737,008.30
- Homes for Ukraine £546,244.39
- VPR £609,125.31

The total of all is £1,892,378.00.

8.8 The ARAP and Homes for Ukraine schemes continue and payments will be made to the separate accounts.

8.9 The VPR scheme has closed with the final payment for the Syrian refugees resettled into Woking being made in 2024. No further money will be received.

## Overview of Resettlement Services

- 8.10 The Resettlement Team is made up of 1 Resettlement and Integration Manager, 1 Family Coordinator (Homes for Ukraine), 1 Family Coordinator (Afghan Scheme) and 1 Family Services Support Officer (Homes for Ukraine). The team are able to handle the schemes with current staffing. If Woking were to have new Afghan families arrive, it is anticipated that the team would need an additional Family Coordinator.

### Risks and Mitigation

#### 8.11 **Governance and monitoring process**

- 8.12 A yearly evaluation document is sent to Boroughs supporting ARAP refugees. The spreadsheet requests updates regarding their integration based on the points outlined in 6.1 above.
- 8.13 To receive continued funding for ARAP refugees, periodical monitoring forms have to be submitted to the Home Office.
- 8.14 Homes for Ukraine monitoring is completed via a UK Government online programme called Palantir; Foundry. Each borough only has access to information of those hosts and their guests who arrived in Woking Borough through the Homes for Ukraine scheme or guests re-assigned to the borough. This information tracks visa's being issued and the necessary safeguarding checks that are undertaken to ensure hosts are suitable. It also records those that move on from the scheme either by finding alternative accommodation from their hosts or leaving the country.
- 8.15 Monthly management accounts and quarterly monitoring forms are submitted to Surrey County Council that ensures Woking Borough receives the correct amount of tariff funding for the refugees they support. No monitoring is tracked regarding integration targets of Homes for Ukraine refugees.
- 8.16 The VPR scheme has closed with funding ended therefore no more monitoring and reporting is required.
- #### 8.17 **Potential risks**
- 8.18 The UK government has confirmed that until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, Homes for Ukraine sponsors/hosts are eligible to receive thank you payments of £350 per household for the initial 12 months that the guests' arrive. In the second year this increases to £500. Surrey County Council agreed for all boroughs to top up this payment so all guests receive £600 per month and so are topped up by £250 in the first 12 months and £100 following that.
- 8.19 The Government has now outlined that after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, hosts will be eligible to receive £350 a month per household, irrelevant of the guests length of time in the UK. This is to encourage guests into private rented accommodation and linked to point made in paragraph 4.3.
- 8.20 This change may impact in an increase of demand on housing advice and access to the rent in advance scheme which needs to be noted for the Committee.

Consultation, Equality Impact Assessments

8.21 None arising from this report.

Environment and Climate Change

8.22 None arising from this report.

**9.0 Supporting Documents**

Appendices

9.1 None.

Background Documents

9.2 UK Gov 2024 (Crown Copy Right) [Funding for councils: Homes for Ukraine - GOV.UK](#)

**Report Ends**