

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities	Scrutiny Committee	Monday, 20 March 2023

Refugee Resettlement Progress Update

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Not applicable
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Not applicable
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Purpose of the Report

- The purpose of the report is to provide a position statement update to Scrutiny Committee on the support and resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in South Ribble as of March 2023.

Recommendations

- Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the update contained in this report.

Reasons for recommendations

- This paper provides an update and does not require a member decision.

Other options considered and rejected

- This paper provides an update and does not require a member decision.

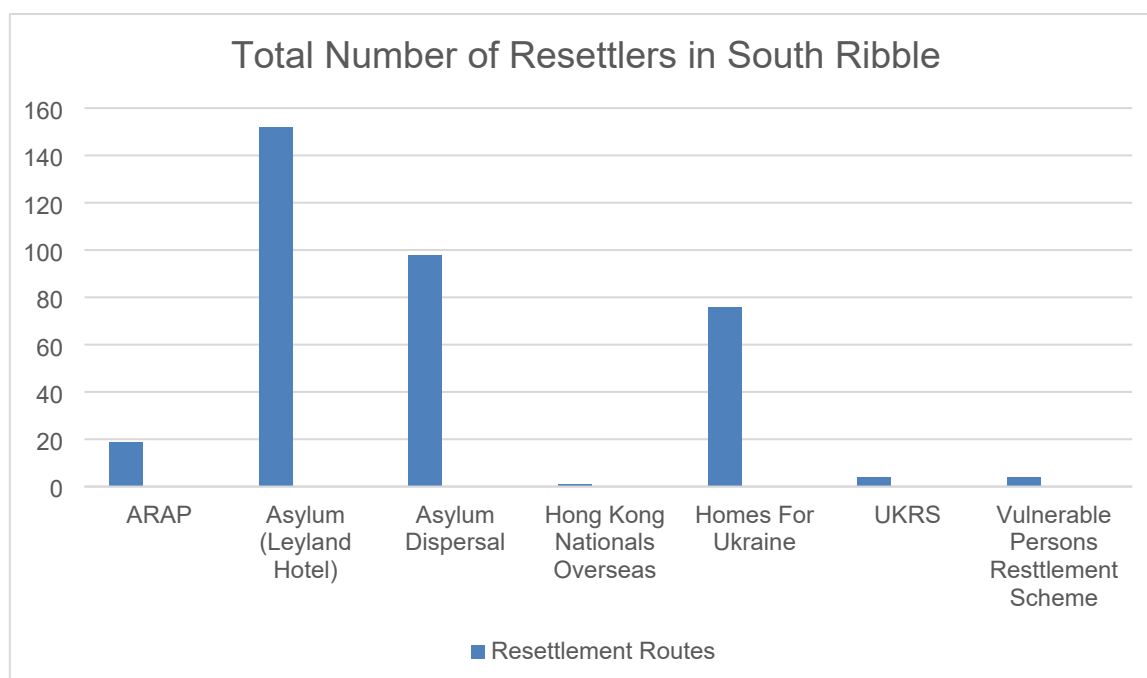
Corporate priorities

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background

6. As of 2 March 2023, South Ribble is now home to 372 refugees and asylum seekers, who have arrived through various resettlement, asylum, or visa routes. Please see appendix A for a Lancashire- wide overview.



Lancashire County Council Lancashire Refugee Integration Team (LRIT) Coordination

7. Support to refugees, asylum seekers and forced migrants is co-ordinated centrally by Lancashire County Council Refugee Integration Team. Its Officers are currently in the process of finalising a county-wide Refugee Resettlement Strategy.
8. They are working closely with Asset Management within Lancashire County Council to develop some robust migration forecasting which can inform school placement planning, as well as wider services.

Scheme-Specific Updates

Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

9. To date, three families have been resettled in South Ribble as part of this scheme; open to individuals/ families who have worked for or alongside the UK government in Afghanistan in 'exposed or meaningful' positions. This heightens the risk of them being targeted by the Taliban or other forces.
10. When an ARAP application is made by an Individual, for themselves or their family - it is initially considered by the Ministry of Defence. If deemed suitable when all the required information is submitted, the Home Office will then determine eligibility and communicate a decision.

11. Local authorities are asked to identify any properties which may be suitable for ARAP families; these are then matched by the Home Office. Councils have the right to decline or accept each match on a case by case basis. Factors considered may include availability of school places within a reasonable distance and / or accessibility of health services.

12. A case study from this scheme can be found in Appendix B.

Asylum Dispersal

13. The Council does not have a direct role in the dispersal of asylum seekers. SERCO is the contractor currently employed to source and manage properties nationally, as well as supporting dispersed asylum seekers on a day to day basis.

14. Asylum seekers have significantly fewer rights than refugees, e.g. they cannot work or claim welfare benefits.

15. There are currently around 96 asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation (rental properties) in South Ribble.

16. We are still awaiting further information from the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership on the next steps of the Asylum Dispersal Consultation.

17. Please note that the asylum data provided in this report is acquired from a national data set which was last updated in September 2022.

Asylum Dispersal (Contingency Accommodation)

18. In February 2022, Leyland Hotel was opened as an asylum seeker hotel and has been an active site since then. Currently, the hotel is at capacity with 170 asylum seekers resident. This is slightly higher than the 152 shown in Appendix A.

19. The Leyland Hotel was 'stood up' by the Home Office for emergency asylum accommodation with less than 36 hours' notice. The Council was not notified in advance; the Home Office deals with hotel owners directly.

20. Neither Lancashire County Council nor South Ribble Borough Council were notified before arrival that the asylum seekers being accommodated in Leyland were families with children.

21. SERCO manage the day to day running of the hotel and are supported by a variety of different partners, this includes the council's Community Development team.

22. The 'spot-booked' hotels (such as Leyland Hotel) have come with an increased range of challenges, including:

- Shorter notice times for local authorities.
- No funding for health partners.
- Infection outbreak control measures.
- Guests' clothing had been lost leaving large numbers of individuals without access to a change of clothes whilst receiving scabies treatment.

- Guests' mobile phones had been removed thus preventing them from accessing Migrant Help services.
23. The council has put a range of measures in place to safeguard asylum seekers for the duration of their stay, and to reassure the local community. This has included:
- Direct contact with hotel management.
 - Direct contact with SERCO staff on site and area managers.
 - Letters to neighbouring residents to explain the Council's position and offer contact details in case of any issues.
 - Hygiene packs provided for each family with soap, shampoo, toothbrushes and toothpaste, water bottles, notepad and pen.
 - Weekly drop-in hour to provide signposting to services.
 - Co-ordination of a clothing donation day with St Catherine's Hospice.
 - Provision of underwear, sanitary items and school uniform.
 - Provision of baby car seats.
 - Provision of table tennis, bikes and sports equipment for shared use.
24. In addition, the Council takes a lead role in a weekly partnership meeting with colleagues from organisations including Police, Fire, NHS, LCC and TippyToes Baby Bank. Through this joined up approach, the following outcomes have been achieved:
- Robust Community Impact Assessment in place.
 - Library services in place at the hotel.
 - All adults receiving ESOL lessons.
 - All asylum seekers registered with a GP.
 - All children received a school place.
25. The Council has no statutory obligation with any of the above, however we remain committed to Leyland Hotel being a safe and harmonious place for the duration of its use as temporary accommodation.

Asylum Dispersal – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

26. There are currently 48 unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the care of Lancashire County Council. They are supporting an additional 58, over the age of 18.
27. 15 of these children have been identified from contingency hotels. The wider region is seeing significant numbers of young people referred from contingency asylum hotels.
28. The updated allocation for the North West per tranche increased slightly following a Home Office data refresh from 49 to 52 UASCs for every 652 UASCs entering the National Transfer Scheme.
29. There is a real shortage of Legal Aid Solicitors offering immigration and legal representation to UASC resulting in delayed asylum resolution for children and adding pressures to local authorities.
30. To date we have 1 UASC within South Ribble.

Chagossian Scheme

31. The new British nationality route opened 23 November 2022 for people of Chagossian descent.
32. 'Chagossians' are people who were born on BIOT (the Chagos Islands) and their descendants. Between 1968 and 1973 the UK government removed people from BIOT and relocated them to Mauritius and Seychelles. Following the passing of the British Overseas Territories Act (2002), many people who were born on BIOT and their children became British citizens and moved to the UK.
33. Lancashire County Council have had several people contact them already and they are in the process of developing their outreach work to ascertain who has arrived within the county.
34. Arrivals applying for benefits will be subject to the habitual residency test and ineligible for payments for the first 12 weeks of life in the UK.
35. It is anticipated that arrivals will present at Local Authority teams as homeless upon arrival to the UK whilst they have no access to funds. Where families arrive with children and no access to accommodation or funds it is possible, they will become a duty of the local authority social services teams.
36. South Ribble Council has not yet received any homelessness presentations from people who have arrived via this scheme.

Hong Kong Nationals overseas

37. South Ribble currently have one individual that is listed as part of the scheme, the scheme is administered by Lancashire County Council and has required no support from South Ribble Council thus far.

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

38. Since March 2022, South Ribble has welcomed 94 guests. 20 of these guests have now moved out of the scheme, either into independent accommodation or by returning to Ukraine. This is slightly higher than the 76 shown in appendix A, due to new arrivals that are not included within that data set.
39. Lancashire Refugee Integration Team has successfully rematched 48 Ukrainian families since June 2022 (an increase of 4 cases since November 2022), therefore preventing them accessing district homelessness services. This totals 82 individuals. Lancashire Refugee Integration Team are unable to offer rematching to guests who have presented a safeguarding concern to their former Sponsors.
40. South Ribble Council, as well as the other 13 Lancashire Councils, agreed to increase the Sponsor 'Thank you' payments by £125 in December and January to assist with concerns raised around the affordability of utility bills over the winter period for Sponsors.
41. We are very grateful to those people who have welcomed Ukrainians into their homes. The support offered by host families goes far above and beyond the provision of accommodation. Often, there is help with accessing services, filling in forms, joining social activities and developing English skills.

United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

42. To date, there are four families who have been resettled in South Ribble as part of this scheme. UKRS offers a safe and legal route to vulnerable refugees in need of protection. It is open to people fleeing from any country, accessible to those who have been assessed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) against categories including:

- Legal or physical protection.
- Survivors of violence or torture.
- Women and girls at risk.
- Family reunification

43. A case study example of the scheme can be found in Appendix B.

Syrian Resettlement Programme

44. South Ribble actively participated in the first round of the Syrian Resettlement Programme in 2015/16. Working with partners at Progress Housing Group, 5 properties across the borough were identified to accommodate families displaced by Syrian conflict.

45. One family moved to London; however the remaining families have settled happily in South Ribble. The children attend local schools, parents have completed English lessons, college courses and gained employment locally.

Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

46. South Ribble currently have 4 individuals that is listed as part of the scheme, the scheme is administered by Lancashire County Council and has required no support from South Ribble Council thus far.

Climate change and air quality

47. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

48. An impact assessment has been carried out for the refugee and asylum seeker support workstream. This ensure that negative impacts are avoided, and positive impacts are identified.

Risk

49. A risk register has been carried out for the refugee and asylum seeker workstream. Key risks identified relate to safeguarding and fraud, however controls are in place to mitigate these risks.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

50. The report is for noting; there are no direct implications arising from this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

51. There are no legal concerns which require to be noted.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Schemes – Lancashire Overview

	Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme/Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme*	Afghan – Find Your Own Accommodation	Asylum Contingency (Hotels)	Asylum Dispersal	Chagossian BOTC	Community Sponsorship	Hong Kong British Nationals Overseas	Homes For Ukraine	Ukraine Family Route		Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme	Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme	District Total
Blackburn with Darwen	29	0	0	501	0	0	0	-	N/K			0	12	497
Blackpool	0	0	430	0	0	0	1	-	N/K			0	11	377
Burnley	16	0	0	381	0	0	1	53	N/K			26	56	477
Chorley	0	0	0	80	0	0	0	125	1			1	45	252
Fylde	9	0	0	51	0	0	0	181	N/K			0	11	238
Hyndburn	42	0	0	403	0	0	0	59	N/K			22	44	562
Lancaster	19	0	309	207	0	3	0	192	1			7	20	637
Pendle	3	0	0	321	0	0	1	77	N/K			5	16	422
Preston	50	6	0	283	0	5	0	112	1			0	46	497
Ribble Valley	0	0	0	17	0	5	0	99	N/K			0	0	113
Rossendale	12	0	0	168	0	0	0	57	N/K			0	17	248
South Ribble	19	0	152	98	0	0	1	76	N/K			4	4	372
West Lancashire	0	0	0	168	0	0	0	134	N/K			0	25	311
Wyre	18	0	0	75	0	0	0	92	N/K			7	30	212
	217	6	944	2785	0	13	4	1261	3		106	72	333	5744

**ACRS arrivals and ARAP arrivals are grouped together as there is still some overlap between the status and eligibility of some ACRS individuals.*

***Asylum Contingency Hotels are an element of the asylum dispersal scheme, however the numbers of people in hotels are not counted towards the asylum dispersal population by the Home Office.*

APPENDIX B: Case Studies – Refugee Schemes

Case Study 1: Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

As part of the ARAP scheme we were tasked with sourcing, furnishing, and moving in two families of refugees into properties which were eventually identified in Bamber Bridge. As a result of working closely with partners we were able to source two new build properties located on a development just past Bamber Bridge Leisure centre. In partnership with Onward Homes, Age Concern, Calico, and other external agencies we were able to fully furnish both properties within 2 weeks and had them ready for the families matched to move in. The properties are 3 bed semi-detached and are next to each other on the development, something which we have found has been valuable for both families which now reside there. Family 1 moved in, in May 2022 and the second moved in just a week later. The true value of this scheme was clear and to see young children overjoyed at a patch of grass in their own garden where they can safely play games and enjoy themselves makes it all worthwhile. Both of those families still reside within the properties, have secured school places for their Children, have secured employment, and are ultimately thriving as part of their new local community, something which is fantastic to see. There are lots of memorable moments from when we moved both families into the properties but nothing beats the first family inviting the late arriving family into their home for full meal on their first night as they knew they would have had a long day. Something so simple, but a truly heart-warming moment to watch them all sat down eating a meal together in a safe, warm, and controlled environment.

Case Study 2: United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) – Farington Scheme

One of the first families to arrive at Leyland Hotel as part of the Asylum scheme that is based there, were a family from Ukraine. Mother, Father, and Daughter, who was 5 years old at the time of arrival. Due to the nature of their escape from Ukraine, the family were left with nothing but the clothes they had on their back. The family's passports and all personal items were stolen by Russian forces at the border. Again, through working in partnership we were quickly able to provide essentials clothing and other items for the family and support them in settling into their new surroundings. Mum and Dad, both qualified lawyers in Ukraine soon set about having their qualifications transferred to the English version and were very quickly able to get their daughter into a local school. Shortly after this the family were granted leave to remain and were asked to leave the hotel 2 weeks later as their placement there had come to an end. Through some fantastic work by our Housing Options team, we were able to secure the family some temporary accommodation for a short time. Following this, the family were able to move into their own rented property in Penwortham, something which they have looked forward to for so long. We have been able to support the family with carpets and furniture and local charities have supported the family in so many ways. Mum and Dad are both currently at college/university studying towards another qualification which will qualify them in English Law and Daughter is still enjoying school and is now speaking fluent English.