

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities (Introduced by Cabinet Member (Communities, Leisure and Wellbeing))	Council	Wednesday, 19 July 2023

## Refugee and Asylum Seeker Grant Funding

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Not applicable
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### Purpose of the Report

- The information in this report provides a breakdown of the grant funding that the council has received and is set to receive to support refugees and asylum seekers, including Homes for Ukraine, UK Refugee Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), Full Asylum Dispersal, and Homelessness Prevention Grant.
- The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members and ask that consideration be made to the recommendations listed below.

### Recommendations to Council

- To receive the funding allocations for each of the below schemes:
  - Homes for Ukraine Scheme
  - Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme
  - UK Resettlement Scheme
  - Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy
  - Homelessness Prevention Grant
- To create budgets allocated to:
  - Homes for Ukraine sponsor 'thank you' payments
  - Asylum seeker support and community integration
  - Refugee support and community integration
  - Homelessness prevention
- To delegate authority to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure, and Wellbeing for decision making relating to these budgets.

### Reasons for recommendations

- The policies and procedures associated with refugees and asylum seeker dispersal are constantly changing, from both the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Consequently, so are the support needs of refugees and asylum seekers and the pressures on local services. The above recommendations will provide the Communities team with the opportunity to further scope proposals for expenditure and align it to the needs of the refugee and asylum-seeker communities which will provide flexibility as needs evolve over time.

### Other options considered and rejected

- To return the funding and not use it to support refugees and asylum seekers in South Ribble or alleviate pressures on local services.

### Corporate priorities

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

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

### Background to the report

- The council works closely with local partners and agencies to support both refugees and asylum seekers across South Ribble. This support is funded through different schemes, more specifically:
  - Homes for Ukraine (asylum seekers)
  - Asylum Seeker Dispersal (asylum seekers)
  - UK Resettlement Scheme (refugees)
  - Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (refugees)
  - Homelessness Prevention Fund (general)
- This report provides an overview of the grant funding allocation for South Ribble, the outcomes of scoping activity undertaken to date and the recommendations for funding allocations and approval.

### Introduction

- An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognised as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.
- Asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society. Securing asylum status is difficult and complex and should this status be granted, asylum seekers are not permitted to work, leaving them dependent on government payments of approximately £5 per day. As a result, asylum seekers' lives are stressful and afflicted by hardship.
- Dispersal is the process by which the Home Office moves asylum seekers to specified local authority areas across the UK. They are first moved to initial accommodation

while their application for asylum support is processed. Once the application has been processed and approved, they are moved on to dispersal accommodation.

11. A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. Refugees can also be highly vulnerable and marginalised, however, unlike asylum seekers they have the right to both work and apply for welfare.

## **Homes for Ukraine Scheme (HfU)**

### **Background**

12. This scheme supports individuals and families escaping the conflict in Ukraine, by matching them with 'sponsors' in the community. Sponsors host Ukrainian guests and receive a monthly 'thank you' payment to cover the costs of hosting.
13. 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.
14. South Ribble Borough Council receives funding from Lancashire County Council on a quarterly basis, this is split between funds that are to be distributed to sponsors as 'thank you' payments, and funds to support those families with housing and community integration, including officer time.

### **Ukrainian Guest Funding Allocation Year 1**

15. From March 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, DLUHC issued funding at a rate of £10,500 per new arrival to upper tier councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. The £10,500 for Ukrainian nationals was initially for the first year but after a government review in October 2022, local authorities have been informed that this tariff is to be used to fund 24 months provision.
16. In two tier areas, it is a condition of the funding that councils must agree a plan locally to make prompt payments to lower tier authorities in relation to all the services which they provide to guests under the HfU scheme, during the full duration of the scheme.
17. This funding comes with several conditions and the government expects councils to use the tariff to meet all their associated costs (both for providing council services and for administering payments).
18. Out of the £10,500 funding, district councils are allocated the following:
  - £2,500 per person to cover housing and homelessness costs
  - £1,000 per person to cover community integration costs

### **Ukrainian Guest Funding Allocation Year 2 (From January 2023)**

19. From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023, upper tier councils will receive funding of £5,900 for each new arrival to support guests and their sponsors. Given the significant decrease in the tariff for year two and the change in year one for the funding to cover 24 months instead of 12, Lancashire County Council have informed the Council that the funding to districts is to be further reduced.

20. Out of the £5,900 funding, district councils have been allocated £1,500 per person to cover housing and homelessness costs.

### Sponsor Thank You Payments

21. Since June 2022, monthly Thank You payments of £350 have been allocated to sponsors. Government guidance stipulates that sponsors will receive £350 a month during the first 12 months of their guests' stay. This increases to £500 once the guest(s) have been in the UK for 12 months. The aim of this increase is to support sponsors who can continue hosting for longer, up to a maximum duration of two years.

### Funding Received in 2022/2023

22. The table below shows a breakdown of the funding received to date:

Quarter (2022/23)	Amount	Status
Q1	£91,000	Received
Q2	£133,700	To be claimed
Q3	£91,700	To be claimed
Q4	£71,200	To be claimed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£387,600</b>	

### Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme

#### Background

23. In March 2022, the Government announced its decision to move to a full asylum dispersal model supported by grant funding. As part of this move, funding was allocated to local authorities for each new dispersal accommodation bed space occupied until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
24. South Ribble Borough 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.
25. There are currently around 108 asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation (rental properties) in South Ribble.
26. In February 2022, Leyland (Preston) Hotel was opened as an asylum seeker hotel and has been an active site since then. Currently, the hotel has 153 asylum seeker residents. SERCO manage the day to day running of the hotel and are supported by a variety of different partners, which includes the council's Community Development team.

### Funding from April 2021 – March 2023

27. For the period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, the Home Office has committed to make funding available to local authorities to assist with the costs of supporting asylum seekers under 'Full Asylum Dispersal'.

28. The funding has been made available to address concerns raised by local authorities in relation to pressure on local services associated with support for asylum seekers.
29. According to the Home Office's funding instruction, the money must be used to facilitate local authorities to support requests for properties made under Full Asylum Dispersal.
30. The table below shows a breakdown of the funding received to date:

<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Status</b>
13 February 2023	£37,000	Received
14 February 2023	£21,000	Received
2 June 2023	£21,000	Received
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£79,000</b>	

31. There has been no expenditure against this budget to date.
32. The Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP) based at Manchester City Council, is the local authority link to the Home Office. They have provided the following guidance regarding the grant funding:
  - A local authority can spend their funding allocation as they wish, to support asylum seekers where there is need. The Home Office does not ask local authorities to specify what they intend to spend the money on,
  - The funding can be utilised over subsequent financial years,
  - The funding is not ring-fenced, so if it remains unallocated before 30 June 2023 it is unlikely that the Home Office will ask for it to be returned.

### **Next Round of Funding**

33. Further measures were also announced to improve the asylum accommodation system which includes:
  - For existing dispersed accommodation and beds in hotels, the Government will provide local authorities with a one off £750 payment for each asylum seeker who is in Home Office accommodation on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 – up from £250 last year. The payment will be made during the first quarter of 2023/24,
  - A pilot will be introduced to offer local authorities an additional one-off payment of up to £3,000 for new dispersal beds which are brought on and occupied quickly.
34. On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023, the Home Office announced the grant 3 funding stream for asylum dispersal. South Ribble's allocation is £195,750. This is calculated based on the number of asylum seekers in the borough as of 1 April 2023.

### **UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)**

#### **Background**

35. South Ribble Borough Council has committed to resettling five UKRS refugee families from 2021-24.
36. 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.

### **Funding Allocated**

37. The council is set to receive the following funding for this scheme:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Status</b>
Housing Sourcing	£10,000	To be claimed
Furniture	£10,000	To be claimed
LA Officer Time	£30,000	To be claimed
Local Integration Fund	£20,000	To be claimed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£70,000</b>	

38. These funds can be claimed in full once all five families have been settled within South Ribble, or 20% each time a family is settled.

### **Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)**

#### **Background**

39. South Ribble Borough Council has committed to resettling ten ARAP refugee families from 2021-24.

40. 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.

41. 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.

42. 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.

#### **Funding Allocated**

43. The council is set to receive the following funding for this scheme:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Status</b>
Housing Sourcing	£20,000	To be claimed
Furniture	£20,000	To be claimed
LA Officer Time	£30,000	To be claimed
Local Integration Fund	£40,000	To be claimed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£110,000</b>	

44. These funds can be claimed in full once all five families have been settled within South Ribble, or 10% each time a family is settled.

## **Homelessness Prevention Grant**

### **Background**

45. On 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023, DLUHC announced that it has allocated £150m to homelessness prevention funding. This funding is allocated in relation to the proportion of Homes for Ukraine arrivals in each part of the UK, with £109.4m to England, £30.0m to Scotland, £8.2m to Wales, and £2.4m to Northern Ireland.
46. In England, the funding will be provided to local authorities as a top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG), and is allocated 66% based on the existing Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations and 34% based on Homes for Ukraine arrivals (using the local authority data from 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023).
47. Although these allocations are calculated based on number of Ukrainian arrivals in the borough, the funds received are ringfenced for homelessness support and prevention, for all residents, not just those that are Ukrainian.
48. It is expected that funding will be used to support with private rent, employment access and sponsorship support.
49. The grant can be spent on Homes for Ukraine sponsor top-up, as long as the sponsor is willing to commit to a minimum of six months.
50. It must be spent in this financial year. It will be clawed back if not spent in accordance with the HPG grant conditions.

### **Funding Allocation for 2023/24**

51. The council is set to receive an additional £72,377.

### **Grant Funding Overview**

52. The below table shows an overview of the funds that are currently available and that are incoming imminently from grant funding.

<b>Current budgets</b>
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<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Amount Received</b>	<b>Amount to Receive</b>	<b>Total Amount</b>
Homes for Ukraine	£91,000	£296,600	£387,600
Asylum Seeker Dispersal	£79,000	£195,750	£274,750
UK Resettlement Scheme	£0	£70,000	£70,000
Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy	£0	£110,000	£110,000
Homelessness Prevention Grant	£0	£72,377	£72,377
<b>Total</b>	<b>£170,000</b>	<b>£744,727</b>	<b>£914,727</b>

53. Although each scheme provides funding to support a specific cohort, all these schemes have flexible criteria and guidelines that enables to council to use the funds for both general (i.e. staffing) and specific (targeted support) purposes.

### **Impact on Internal Teams**

54. To date, South Ribble Council has not had specific resource allocated supporting refugees and asylum seekers. These schemes have been managed through using existing resources within the Community Development and Housing Options teams.
55. The Community Development team frequently work with community partners to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers within South Ribble receive the support that they require. This includes but is not limited to:
- Attending drop-in sessions at Leyland Hotel,
  - Coordinating Homes for Ukraine sponsorship payments,
  - Providing essentials for refugee and asylum seeker families i.e. food, clothing, school uniform,
  - Preparing homes for refugee families,
  - Making referrals through to appropriate partner agencies for support.
56. Environmental Health receive requests to undertake postcode checks on areas where asylum seeker dispersal may take place. This is undertaken to ensure that asylum seekers are not accommodated in areas where anti-social behaviour or hate crime is an issue as this could further exacerbate community tensions. They also carry out property checks at all homes before they are approved to be sponsors for Homes for Ukraine guests.
57. The Housing Options team regularly support refugees to find temporary or emergency accommodation once they receive their 'Right to Remain' status. Once this status has been granted, Refugees are served a 28 day notice by the accommodation provider to vacate their Home Office accommodation, which is often not at the start of the process and this leaves little time to secure alternative living arrangements. The resource from the Housing team is intensive due to the complexity of the individuals and the additional support required to ensure they are fully supported.



## Support Available from Community Partners

58. In South Ribble, there are four main organisations that offer support to asylum seekers and refugees; SERCO, Calico, British Red Cross, and Citizens Advice.
59. 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. SERCO also manages the day-to-day support for asylum seekers at Leyland Hotel.
60. Calico is the primary partner for the refugee resettlement programmes (UKRS and ARAP). They work with Lancashire County Council and District Council to identify properties and integrate families into new communities.
61. The British Red Cross have been commissioned by Lancashire County Council to deliver a drop-in support service at Leyland Baptist Church, providing specialist immigration advice and guidance.
62. Citizens Advice has also been offering immigration advice to asylum seekers for many years. However, their advisors are only trained to offer low-level immigration signposting support and access to interpreters can be a challenge.

## Feedback from Partners

63. Priority areas for support include:
  - Access to health and wellbeing opportunities, such as gym memberships, exercise classes and alternative therapies,
  - Digital inclusion through access to devices and connectivity,
  - Health advocacy support,
  - Affordable transportation,
  - Access to community-based support and spaces to socialise.

## Proposed Spend

64. The Communities team propose to undertake further scoping activity and develop a spending proposal for the grant funding which:
  - Mitigates the impact on internal teams,
  - Aligns to the priorities and needs of asylum seekers and refugees.
65. A Community Integration Officer is to be appointed on a fixed-term basis for 24 months, which will provide the needed capacity to ensure effective delivery of the schemes and its management to deliver targeted projects and interventions.
66. The Community Integration Officer will work across different services which include the Community Development team, Housing Options and the incoming Social Prescribing Team with the purpose of developing targeted community provision and opportunities that ensure refugees and asylum seekers receive the support that they need.
67. A high-level overview of proposed spend is outlined below:

<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£914,727</b>	<b>100%</b>
Homes for Ukraine sponsor 'thank you' payments	£251,940	27.5%
Asylum seeker community integration support and projects	£410,410	44.9%

Refugee community integration support and projects	£180,000	19.7%
Homelessness prevention	£72,377	7.9%

68. 27.5% of the funding is ring-fenced to 'Thank You' payments for Homes for Ukraine sponsors, however the remainder of the funding is flexible.
69. Funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant will be directed into the Housing Options team to support service delivery in response to high demand for services (7.9%).
70. The funding allocated to 'asylum seeker community integration support and projects' (44.9%) will be used for targeted projects and interventions supporting those in Leyland Hotel, and in the Homes for Ukraine, and Asylum Seeker Dispersal schemes.
71. The funding allocated to 'refugee community integration support and projects' (19.7%) will be used for targeted projects and interventions supporting those in UKRS and ARAP schemes.
72. Recruited post(s) will be funded through both the 'asylum seeker community integration support and projects' (70%) and 'refugee community integration support and projects' (30%) budgets, with the officer(s) supporting both groups.
73. A Community Integration Officer will be recruited on a fixed-term 24-month contract to be the operation lead for these workstreams. Further scoping of specific interventions and project will be carried out once they are in post.
74. The Communities team recommend that these spending proposals be delegated for approval to the Executive Member for Communities, Leisure, and Wellbeing.

#### Climate change and air quality

75. 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

76. Any proposals for expenditure will support the council's objectives around promoting equality and diversity. Refugees and asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society. The funding made available to local authorities to assist with the costs of supporting these communities will ensure inclusivity by allowing refugees and asylum seekers to participate in activities which encourage the development of personal resilience.
77. An impact assessment will be completed once proposals for expenditure have been fully scoped.

#### Risk

78. **Not spending funding** – if this funding is not spent within the timeframes outlined within each grant agreement, the funding must be returned to the provider. Scoping work will be carried out to ensure that community benefit is optimised through effective use of the funding.

79. **Not meeting government requirements** – if government guidelines are not followed when spending the grants, funding could be clawed back. Government requirements will be given consideration throughout the scoping process to ensure that guidelines are followed.
80. All project proposals will be scoped accordingly, and risks identified through appropriate policies and procedures.

#### **Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer**

81. We have received £170,000 of grant funding and there is a further allocation of funding yet to be received of £744,727 for the various grants mentioned above in point 54. A high-level overview of the proposed spend has been tabled in point 70 with the total of £914,727. Expenditure will only be made in line with relevant conditions and on assurance it can be fully externally funded.

#### **Comments of the Monitoring Officer**

82. This is a comprehensive report on the grant funding to be received in this area. Authority is sought to receive these monies and create appropriate budgets. Because of the need to move quickly at times delegated authority is also sought for appropriate decision making powers.

#### **Background documents**

83. There are no background papers to this report.

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