

Cabinet

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	5 April 2017
<p><u>Cabinet Member(s)</u> Deborah Croney(S) – Cabinet Member for Learning, Skills and Children’s Safeguarding</p> <p><u>Local Member(s)</u> ALL (S) – County Councillors</p> <p><u>Lead Director(s)</u> Sara Tough – Director for Childrens Services</p>	
Subject of Report	Syrian Resettlement Programme
Executive Summary	<p>This report is intended to update the Cabinet on the progress made so far in the Syrian Resettlement Programme and to consider the potential for expansion to the end of the national programme in 2020. The report focuses on the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background 2. The programme in Dorset 3. The future of the programme 4. Recommendations
<p>Impact Assessment:</p> <p><i>Please refer to the protocol for writing reports.</i></p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>An EqIA was completed for the initial 12 month programme.</p> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>Evidence has been sought from other experienced local authorities, South West Councils and the Home Office. We have through our work with providers used their knowledge and skills to make appropriate service decisions relating to our work with families. The Dorset Islamic Centre is also advising where appropriate.</p> <p>Budget:</p> <p>Funding is provided to cover the costs of five years and extra funding is available for extreme cases. Costs are generally front loaded and then are recouped after arrival.</p>

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	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p>Current Risk: MEDIUM Residual Risk: MEDIUM</p>
	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>This report is solely on the Syrian Resettlement Programme which does not include unaccompanied asylum seeking children or other groups or programmes.</p>
Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Cabinet note the current work and joint work with other local authorities and partners. 2. The Cabinet approve the resettlement of up to 12 families per year to the end of the programme in 2020.
Reason for Recommendation	The government is keen for all local authorities to play their part and Dorset has been asked about resettlement plans to the end of 2020 by the Home Office and a response is required ASAP as appropriate.
Appendices	None
Background Papers	<p>Cabinet report – June 2016</p> <p>Cabinet report – September 2016</p>
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1. Background

- 1.1. In June 2016, Cabinet agreed to the resettlement of 6-8 Syrian families in Dorset through the national Syrian Resettlement Programme which has a commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrians by the end of 2020.
- 1.2. The programme takes the families identified by the UN as the most in need in the camps that border Syria and matches them with offers of accommodation from local authorities. Each individual is then granted five years humanitarian protection status after which time they can either apply to remain in the UK or return home.
- 1.3. The resettling local authority receives funding from the Home Office for each individual of £8,520 for the first year with the expectation that families will be independent after 12 months. There is further, tapering funding available for years two to five.
- 1.4. Further funding of £4,500 per child is available for education with additional funding available for SEN cases where required.

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- 1.5. Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Department for Work and Pensions are also funded separately.
- 1.6. It should be noted that this is a different programme to the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children that has been subject to previous Cabinet reports and national changes to the approach.

2. The programme in Dorset

- 2.1. Two families arrived through the Dorset programme at the end of 2016. A third property has been secured and is awaiting a family being matched and another property will be made available in the coming months.
- 2.2. Housing colleagues at Dorset Councils Partnership have been involved in identifying potential landlords and properties through their existing contacts and through contacts that have been made specifically during this programme. Housing colleagues have inspected properties, drawn up tenancy agreements and liaised with landlords where necessary.
- 2.3. The two families that have been resettled so far have received support through an experienced local charity for integration support. The charity provides a dedicated caseworker for each family to help with health and jobcentre appointments, interpretation, introduction to the local community as well as a 'gatekeeping' role to vet and utilise volunteer support.
- 2.4. The families have also received a generous amount of support from local volunteers and groups in their area who are helping with transport, befriending and extra English language support among many other things.
- 2.5. Dorset County Council provides much of the pre-arrival coordination through securing school places, working with partners including health and the police, securing properties (along with district and borough council colleagues) and English language support. There is also work on developing voluntary and community sector support into actions.
- 2.6. The first two families have achieved successful outcomes in that they are proactively participating in English lessons and are going out into their local community independently. One adult has started some training and the children have made friends and are actively participating in school.

3. The future of the programme

- 3.1. Dorset County Council has been asked about plans for further resettlement to the end of the programme in 2020. Neighbouring authorities have pledged places ranging from 50 families in Somerset to 140 families in Gloucestershire.
- 3.2. It is anticipated that seven families will have arrived in Dorset by December 2017. The availability of private rented, affordable accommodation is the major issue for this programme and this is reflected in comments made from other local authorities across the country.
- 3.3. Getting more housing authorities involved in the programme is one way that more suitable properties could be found, however, rents in certain areas of the county would be difficult to meet.
- 3.4. The programme relies quite heavily on philanthropic landlords at the moment who come forward with their property to be used for this programme. Further work could be put into the community offer to open up the availability of properties for the programme.
- 3.5. Based on the current and potential availability of housing suitable for this programme it is estimated that Dorset could resettle up to 12 families per year in the years 2017-18 up to the end of 2020.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. It is recommended that Cabinet note the current work on the programme and the joint work with other local authorities and partners.

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4.2. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the resettlement of up to 12 families per year for the years 2017-18 up to the end of the programme in 2020.

Sara Tough

Director for Children's Services

April 2017