
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

28 SEPTEMBER 2023

AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides elected members with an update on the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and the support in place to assist those Afghan families who supported British Forces whilst they were in Afghanistan. There are many eligible at risk families in third countries, most notably Pakistan, and the report provides information on their route to resettlement in Argyll and Bute and the support provided to start a new life in safety.

AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme was launched by the UK government in April 2021 and works with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to relocate current and former Locally Employed Staff who worked with the British Forces in Afghanistan and identified to be at serious risk of threat to life. The scheme includes immediate family members of those eligible for relocation and participating local authorities are funded to provide integration support for three years.
- 2.2 The UK Government is now looking to facilitate the relocation and resettlement of eligible Afghan families in third countries. Having fled Afghanistan there are many families with an MoD connection primarily in Pakistan who have been accepted for the ARAP scheme and are awaiting a property offer in the UK.
- 2.3 The MoD have a large property portfolio in the UK and have been working in partnership with local authorities to offer MoD properties for Afghans on the ARAP scheme with the local authority providing integration support. The MoD have identified nine properties in Helensburgh which would provide suitable accommodation for families.
- 2.4 The proposed approach, following a successful national pilot scheme, would be for the MoD to lease the properties to the ARAP families with the local authority supporting families funded by the integration tariff.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Elected members are asked to agree the continuing support for Afghan relocation and the provision of integration support for families through the ARAP scheme.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The MoD has been working closely with Local Authorities to lease their properties since 2021, for eligible families under the ARAP scheme who worked with the British Forces in Afghanistan and are identified to be at serious risk of threat to life.
- 4.2 Local Authorities had previously encountered some barriers to leasing homes from the MoD. Earlier this year a model of Direct Leasing was developed which will allow families to lease the properties from the MoD instead of Local Authorities. After a successful pilot the model of Direct Leasing is being rolled out nationally.
- 4.3 The MoD have identified 9 suitable properties, owned by them, in Helensburgh, 8 three bedroom properties and 1 four bed property. The properties will be leased directly to families by the MoD under the Direct Leasing model at the Local Housing Allowance rate. These properties will be prepared to a Move-In standard, including furnishing and white goods, by the MOD and suitable families will be matched to the property. Visas and travel will then be arranged.
- 4.4 All those who are resettled through ARAP will benefit from full rights and entitlements through Indefinite Leave to Remain, providing them with the certainty and stability they need to build their life here. The local authority will receive integration tariff whilst families are living in MoD properties of £20,520 per person over 3 years to provide ongoing integration support. In addition there is funding available in year 1 for education, adult ESOL and healthcare.
- 4.5 The local authority will provide school places and nursery places for 2-4 year olds facilitated. Further education will be available for 16-19 year olds with those aged 19 and over also eligible for access to funding for Further Education places.
- 4.6 English classes for adults (ESOL) will be provided and employability support offered. All families will have access to a resettlement support worker to help them navigate, access and register with mainstream services (including schools' registration, GP registration, Job Centre Plus appointments and utility registration). Their support worker will also provide advice around and referral to appropriate mental health services.
- 4.7 Integration support across the authority is coordinated by a multi-agency partnership the membership of which includes representatives from the Resettlement team, Education, Housing, Employability, Business Gateway, Welfare Rights and Trading Standards, Revenue and Benefits, Community Development, Social Work, Public Health and Primary Care, Registered Social Landlords, DWP, Social Security Scotland, Live Argyll, UHI Argyll, third sector, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Direct Leasing of vacant MoD properties to Afghan families who supported the British Forces in Afghanistan offers secure accommodation and the ability to rebuild a life in safety. Argyll and Bute has a proud track record of resettling refugees and the Afghan families under the ARAP scheme will be offered integration support from the Resettlement team coordinated by the multi-agency partnership.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – Approval to participate in the Afghan resettlement scheme was given by Council in September 2021

6.2 Financial – Tariff funding be provided by the Home Office as outlined in para 4.4

6.3 Legal – no implications

6.4 HR – no implications

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

6.5.1 Equalities - It is not anticipated that any of the recommendations in this report will have a potential negative impact on any particular group or discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or religion and belief.

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – no implications

6.5.3 Islands – no implications

6.6 Climate Change – no implications

6.7 Risk – no implications

6.8 Customer Service – support will be put in place to access council services.

Douglas Hendry

Executive Director with responsibility for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Cllr Robin Currie – Leader

13th September 2023

For further information contact: Morag Brown, Business Improvement Manager
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