
Evaluation Of The Argyll and Bute Refugee Resettlement Programme

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Argyll and Bute Council was one of the first local authorities in Scotland to respond to the humanitarian crisis developing in Syria by agreeing to resettle Syrian refugee families through the Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. Nearly a year on from the arrival of the first group of refugees the support given to the families on Bute has been evaluated. Seeking the views of the families who were resettled on the island a comprehensive analysis has considered the support given against the following headings; housing, education, welfare and employability, health and integration into the community. The lessons learnt from all agencies and the volunteers have helped to inform the support that is delivered to the families and the model is constantly reviewed to ensure that it best meets the needs of the families living on the Isle of Bute. The strength of the partnership working and the commitment to improve the lives of our Syrian families by everyone involved has driven the success of the programme.

The recommendations in the report are:

That members note the content of this report and the good work of the Refugee Resettlement Group in resettling Syrian refugees on the Isle of Bute.

That members agree the resettlement of further families on Bute beyond the initial 20 family commitment reflecting the success of the support programme and the clear desire of the families to be joined by their extended family living as refugees in the countries surrounding Syria. The Refugee Resettlement Group would ensure that suitable housing is available, the health service can support medical needs and there is capacity in the schools.

Evaluation Of The Argyll and Bute Refugee Resettlement Programme

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In September 2015 Argyll and Bute Council became one of the first local authorities in Scotland to respond to the humanitarian crisis developing in Syria by agreeing to resettle Syrian refugee families through the Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. This scheme had been relaunched by the Home Office to meet the commitment of the then prime minister to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees during the lifetime of this parliament.
- 2.2 At the September 2015 Council meeting elected members agreed that we would resettle 20 families in the first instance with the possibility of more in the future. The Refugee Resettlement Group was formed under the banner of the Community Planning Partnership with membership from both Council services and partner agencies. Members included housing, education, adult learning, health and social work, benefits, Business Gateway, communications, ACHA, Fyne Homes, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, DWP and from the third sector Bute Advice Centre, Carr Gomm and Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (TSI).
- 2.3 The Refugee Resettlement Group agreed that Bute best met the criteria drawn up to support refugee families having available property, capacity in schools and ability to access health care. Other considerations were also taken into account but these three were the primary factors.
- 2.4 The first 10 families were resettled on Bute on 3 December 2015 followed by a further 5 families on 15 February 2016. Moving forward it was agreed that we would look to resettle relatives of those we had already brought to the island, having submitted a number of family reunification requests to the Home Office. We have now brought in three families through this route and reuniting families has had a hugely positive effect on our families and makes the delivery of support significantly easier.
- 2.5 As the project has been running for just over a year and many of our families are reaching the end of their first year of the 5 year programme, the council is required to evaluate the programme and look to see what has worked well and what we can do better in the future.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the council:

a) note the content of this report and the good work of the Refugee Resettlement Group in resettling Syrian refugees on the Isle of Bute.

b) agree the resettlement of further families on Bute beyond the initial 20 family commitment reflecting the success of the support programme and the clear desire of the families to be joined by their extended family living as refugees in the countries surrounding Syria. The Refugee Resettlement Group would ensure that suitable housing is available, the health service can support medical needs and there is capacity in the schools.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Refugees arriving in the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) Scheme are entitled to a 5 year humanitarian visa which allows them access to benefits and the ability to work in the UK. Families are matched to their local authorities by the Home Office and prior to our families arriving council staff put considerable time in advising the Home Office about Argyll and Bute and our geography, our communities and our labour market.

4.2 The Council was assured that the arriving families would be from rural Syria. This information turned out not to be accurate and we have families from Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Daraa and some families from rural areas. However the skills and experience that our families bring are transferable and it is hoped that improving English language skills will enable many to be able to find work opportunities.

4.3 Each family is supported by a range of agencies who work with them. Bute Advice Centre are commissioned to provide a support worker for each family and the Council has appointed two Arabic speaking community interpreters and a refugee support worker to coordinate all of the arrangements. These services are funded by the grant provided by the Home Office.

4.4 At 31 October 2016 there are 18 refugee families resettled on Bute under the VPR scheme. This equates to 70 individuals in total; 17 men, 18 women, 19 boys and 15 girls and one baby born on the island in April. There are more babies due to be born in the next few months. Babies born in Scotland are granted the refugee status of their parents and we do not receive funding for them under the scheme.

4.5 Families are free to leave the local authority they have been matched to and should they move to another location their funding would cease to our authority, it does not however follow them. Since our first families arrived the Home Office

have changed their funding policy and procedures and whilst there has been no overall change in the monies received we currently have the challenge in claiming in accordance with the terms of three different payment schemes.

- 4.6 The Syrian VPR scheme provides funding over a five year period for each individual. Local authorities receive the following unit costs from the Home Office in year 1:
- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| Children under the age of 3 | Unit cost = £8,520 |
| Children aged 3-4 | Unit cost = £10,770 |
| Children aged 5-18 | Unit cost = £13,020 |
| Adults in receipt of mainstream benefits | Unit cost = £8,520 |
| Other adults | Unit cost = £8,520 |
- Age is taken at date of arrival in the UK and year 1 costs commence at that date. Additional monies are paid direct to the local Health Boards to cover both primary and secondary care. Year 2 to 5 funding is allocated on a tariff basis over four years, tapering from £5,000 per person in year 2 to £1,000 per person in year 5. The overall total budget for year 1 for 69 refugees is circa £680k.

- 4.7 When looking to evaluate our Refugee Resettlement Programme the Scottish Government's New Scot's - Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities Strategy provides a framework and an indicator set which not only reflects the support we have provided but also the needs of our families from day 1 of their arrival. The strategy promotes a model similar to that of our own with partnership approaches, joined up working and early intervention to support refugees to rebuild their lives in Scotland. The three areas within the strategy are to support refugees to
- Build a new life in Scotland and realise their potential;
 - Access mainstream services, employment and training; and
 - Develop social relations to support their integration
- This has allowed us to evaluate our refugee resettlement programme in relation to the support and advice provided under the following headings; housing, education, welfare and employability, health and integration into the community.

- 4.8 Each of our families were invited to be interviewed and asked to score the support that they have received from all agencies and volunteers on a scale of 0 to 7, with 1 being the lowest score and 7 the highest and a score of 0 not relevant. The refugee resettlement group also self-scored as a comparator. The scores given by each family is illustrated in appendix 1. The support that has been provided for each heading is detailed below along with the key learning points

5.0 Housing

- 5.1 Availability of suitable housing was the first priority for the group, working with the Registered Social Landlords on Bute, ACHA and Fyne Homes, we have been able to provide appropriate housing for all of our families. Void costs are covered by the Home Office as part of the funding package and the RSLs were able to decorate and modernise their properties, whilst the council's housing

team oversaw the carpeting and furnishing. Each family's property is finished to a high standard and in addition to new furniture, "starter packs" with bedding, towels, crockery, cutlery, pots and pans are provided by the Pass It On project and each child was welcomed to their new bedroom by a toy box full of donated toys to help them to settle in.

- 5.2 Each family has signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement with the RSL's which offers greater degree of security for the families than a private tenancy.
- 5.3 Televisions and TV licences were purchased for each family, TV is a very useful way of helping to learn a new language and a year's broadband was also provided again to help with the learning of language but also as a means to stay in touch with family back home through Skype etc.
- 5.4 The resettlement of refugees on Bute attracted a significant amount of media attention and donations for the families were received from across Argyll and Bute and wider afield. The initial arrivals were greeted with a massive amount of donations comprising clothing, food, and household goods including mobile phones, tablet computers and bikes for the children.
- 5.5 When our first families arrived, volunteers on Bute helped to sort out all of the donations and helped the families to choose appropriate clothing for both themselves and their children. A better cultural awareness would have helped and certainly initially everyone felt a bit overwhelmed. However very quickly the refugees were able to help out one another and for all subsequent arrivals we have asked the refugees to take on a lead role in sorting out donations and purchasing appropriate food ready to welcome new families.
- 5.6 For families arriving now our focus is on ensuring the house is adequately furnished, there is food in the fridge and that the children have suitable clothing and toys to play with. For those with young babies, prams, buggies, cots and nappies are provided.
- 5.7 The key issues we have had to respond to in relation to housing have been due to a lack of understanding of construction in Scotland versus the middle east, our floors are not concrete and nor do bathrooms have central drains and we have had a few issues with flooding in bathrooms. Families prefer to wash in running water and not all of our properties have showers. All families have been provided with accommodation which meets the needs of their family however some of those in tenement flats do say that they find the stairs difficult. Three of the families were housed on the edge of town in a community a mile and a half from the centre, these families complain about travel costs and the lack of public transport at night. Bus passes have been provided and transport costs are refunded by the DWP for those attending English class. School transport is also provided for those families and for all of our nursery school age children.

- 5.8 For those families who have indicated a preference to leave the island or to move to alternative accommodation in Rothesay we support the family with their housing application form, ensuring that we can maximise the number of points available to them. Managing expectations is sometimes a challenge here and an appreciation of timescales can sometimes lead to frustration. That said at time of writing two families are considering leaving the island and several others are looking for new accommodation on the island. The birth of new babies will in time mean that families may need to move to larger accommodation.
- 5.9 The average score for housing needs being met is 5.08, scores ranged from 1 given by those living on the outskirts of town to 7. However once these outlier scores are removed families scored their housing between 5 and 7. Support to fully understand the housing options available to the families reflected their satisfaction with their current housing, with those that are satisfied showing very little inclination to want to move and therefore giving a low score to any information if any they had been given. However conversely some families also felt they had been unable to access alternative housing options and in this instance have also given a low score. The average housing options score is 3.36 with a full range of scores being given.

6.0 Education

- 6.1 All of the families are supported to learn English and for the adults attendance at class forms part of their claimant commitment by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The VPR scheme requires a minimum of 60 hours English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision for each adult refugee. ESOL has been delivered by the Council's Adult Learning Service, with CELTA qualified tutors teaching each class. It became apparent early on that in Syria men and women were taught separately and we have been able to provide separate classes for men and women. The refugees were assessed and we have a beginners, intermediate and advanced class. One to one support is given to those who have difficulties with literacy in their own language and are struggling to learn.
- 6.2 In addition to ESOL lessons our interpreter runs a class on English grammar, being an Arabic speaker means it is easier to explain the technicalities of the English language in Arabic, pronouns were a challenge. We also have a group of volunteers who support families with their language either tailoring this to a specific need, addressing isolation or helping with ESOL homework. One of our volunteers recently created and delivered "English for Driving" lessons to those who are looking to sit their UK driving test, which were very well received.
- 6.3 Managing expectations and keeping up motivation are the key challenges for those learning English. The ESOL programme is created to ensure that men and women are both given the opportunity to attend class, taking it in turn to look after children who aren't yet in school. However with numerous health appointments and other commitments attendance isn't always as high as it could be. This is often coupled with the frustrations of learning a new language

and the Adult Learning team regularly assess the learning needs and level of attainment and provision and class material is tailored accordingly. We have recently purchased licences for an online self-directed training course which once completed will take learner to SCQF level 4, those currently in the intermediate class have been offered this opportunity.

- 6.4 In the evaluation, support to achieve English language skills scored an average of 5.67, with scores ranging from 4 to 7. Low scores were attributed to a desire for more provision and a change in teaching method to a more formal style and high scores to the quality and breadth of the support on offer. All of the families interviewed stated their appreciation of the support that they have been given to learn English and are aware of the challenges that this has given everyone.
- 6.5 All school and preschool age children attend Rothesay Joint Campus. At time of writing there are 26 Syrian pupils at the school with 7 in the nursery, 19 in the primary and 6 in the secondary. The involvement of the school has very much been at the heart of the response and the support to the refugee families. Reflecting the school's role in the community and acknowledging that the decisions our families made to come to the UK were to afford their children a better life. Before arrival school pupils were very active in their preparations increasing their awareness and understanding of the situation in Syria, what it means to be a refugee and forced to leave your home and an understanding of Muslim and Arabic culture. School pupils also produced a short film reaching out and welcoming their new friends and this film has been shown to all of our families on arrival. In addition the head teacher, teaching staff and senior pupils have been an integral part of the support team meeting families at the airport and travelling with them over to Bute.
- 6.6 Additional resources have been put in place to support learning. These include additional staffing and I pads. All children have a Universal Child's Plan which identifies their support requirements, outlines targets and necessary actions. Educational Psychology have and will continue to provide additional support as and when required.
- 6.7 The scale of work undertaken to support pupils arriving with English as an Additional Language (EAL) has strengthened the overall provision at Rothesay Joint Campus. It has enabled the school to develop a focused strategy and to implement effective systematic processes to engage and support children and young people with EAL. Progress of all new pupils is continually monitored to ensure that each child is working to their full potential.
- 6.8 The education opportunities and support at Rothesay Joint Campus scored very highly in the evaluation with an average score of 6.33 and the lowest score of 4 given by those who felt that the Scottish teaching style in the primary was less formal than the Syrian style they were used to. 9 families scored the school support the highest possible score of 7.

- 6.9 The support given to families to consider and access further education opportunities was also evaluated. There is a direct correlation to the level of English so this measure was not relevant to all families. For several of the women who have arrived, their studies were abruptly brought to an end when they had to flee Syria. Several of these woman have spoken about picking up their education again now that they are in the UK. In addition one of our young people is trying to access college courses and or an advanced ESOL course on the mainland and is being supported to do so by Skills Development Scotland.
- 6.10 Argyll College have been working in partnership with the programme and provided a very successful Skills for Work programme on hairdressing and are looking at further courses that could be provided.
- 6.11 We are also working with colleagues in Education Scotland and Scottish Government to determine the Scottish equivalencies for Syrian qualifications so that we can offer the best support and advice.
- 6.12 Acknowledging that access to further education is not something that is relevant to all of our families scores ranged from 0 to 7, with the average being 4.5. Those that had been offered information were very appreciative of it. Those hoping to start college frustrated at the availability of places especially to study advanced ESOL.

7.0 Welfare and employability

- 7.1 On arrival all of the families are supported to make benefits claims. Support is provided by the Job Centre and staff from Bute Advice Centre. The majority of families are on Job Seekers Allowance, with a small numbers receiving Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Families also receive housing benefit, council tax benefit and family tax credits. For those that have been able to move from benefits into employment support is given to ensure the family receive the appropriate benefits. In addition to ensuring benefits are in place Bute Advice also provide support with budgeting and energy efficiency.
- 7.2 The families scored their support and understanding of benefits system and welfare support highly. The average score is 6.17 with scores ranging from 4 for a family with an ongoing issue with HMRC to 8 families giving a maximum score of 7.
- 7.3 Families were asked about their understanding and knowledge of the labour market and potential job opportunities for them on Bute. There is an obvious tie in to language skills here and this was highlighted by everyone. Interestingly there was a range of scores, with the average score being 3.7 and optimism from some that there would be job opportunities available but some also concerned that they would have to leave the island to find work.

- 7.4 Volunteering opportunities have been actively sought by everyone involved in the project. Three of the men took part in the project which created a community garden on a gap site in the town. Many of the men volunteered at this summer's Butefest and several have volunteered at a local charity. The benefits of volunteering are huge and the opportunities to do so relished by the families. Not only does this improve their English and support integration but it allows them to pay back the community that have welcomed and supported them. Volunteering scored an average of 5.67 with an acknowledgment that the opportunities that have been identified so far have not suited everyone and have been exclusively offered to the men.
- 7.5 One adult and two young people have been able to find employment on the island and their success has offered encouragement to others. One other individual has been supported to apply for jobs but to date hasn't been successful. Support is being provided by the Job Centre, Bute Advice and the support team. Moving forward, support to prepare CVs and to fill out job applications will be a priority. Employability support received a mixed score reflecting readiness to enter the job market, the average score was 5.0.
- 7.6 The skills for work programme delivered by Argyll College was very useful in raising the awareness of careers in hairdressing and beauty. One individual has just completed an extended period of work experience at a local business and work shadowing opportunities are being considered by others.
- 7.7 The effectiveness of the Argyll and Bute model received national recognition when the Home Office selected us to pilot their project to provide support for those who want to set up their own business. Demonstrating Argyll and Bute's strength in family business entrepreneurship, 6 of our families are taking part in this. Support is being provided to the families by Rebuilding Through Excellence, the Home Office's partner organisation and the Council's Business Gateway service and the families are developing business cases. Some ideas are better developed than others but all who have participated appreciated the benefits of the entrepreneurial training course delivered over three days and the follow up calls and meetings with their business advisors and Business Gateway. Business Gateway have also been able to bring in the support of other council services such as regulatory services and there is now a team working with the families.
- 7.8 Not all families have received this support and, all who have, are realising that the bureaucracy in the UK is greater than in Syria. Business cases are nearing completion and at time of writing are still to be assessed to see if they will support the business loans that have been requested. Issues such as availability of commercial premises and Sharia compliant finance are proving problematic. The average score for entrepreneurial support is 4.3 and for those participating in the programme the scores given were between 4 and 6.

8.0 Health

- 8.1 The model of health care in the UK is very different to that experienced by our families in Syria, where private health care was prevalent. Whilst families were living in the countries surrounding Syria as refugees it was very difficult to access any health treatment. Developing an understanding and managing the expectations of the health service in the UK has been a key issue for health colleagues working with the Syrian families. This coupled with a need for an interpreter at all appointments has meant that responding to health needs has been both challenging, a steep learning curve and resource intensive.
- 8.2 To help inform families of the model of health care and the care pathways health colleagues held awareness sessions on Friday afternoons over a number of weeks on a huge range of topics. Sessions were led by the relevant health professional supported by an interpreter and plenty of time was allowed to ask questions. It is fair to say that some sessions were better attended than others but the families appreciated these sessions and this was fed back at the evaluation, with 6 families scoring this a 7. The average score was 5.58 and the range of scores given reflects the attendance at these sessions.
- 8.3 Many of the families were in poor health when they arrived with us. All members of the family were given a full medical assessment by the International Organisation of Migration prior to leaving for the UK and this information was shared with us and passed on in turn to the relevant health professionals. This allowed a degree of preparation to be made in advance. Many of the adult males smoke and nearly everyone arriving requires dental treatment and this coupled with injuries when incarcerated has meant that the families have received a significant amount of health care, both primary care delivered on island and secondary care the majority of which has been provided off island in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.
- 8.4 The families gave a mixed score to their health needs being met, the average score being 4.83, with waiting times and distance to travel being cited as reasons for lower scores. Support with medical appointments has become a large part of what the support workers do, though this is now lessening off as families receive treatment and early issues with the provision of interpreters at appointments have reduced with only the occasional problem now.

9.0 Integration into the community

- 9.1 The community on Bute has been very welcoming and friendships have developed with the local indigenous community and the new Syrian families. Prior to the families' arrival local volunteers were able to register their support on the Council's website on the Argyll and Bute Welcomes Refugees webpage. The volunteers ran the "pop up" community centre which was used by the first two groups of families to come together and get to know one another and for the support team to meet with them. The community centre was also the venue for

many of the activities and social events held in the first few months of arrival including a Scottish Syrian disco, the Thank You lunch and other events.

- 9.2 Volunteers also helped escort families to hospital appointments off island until they were familiar with the public transport arrangements and a small group of volunteers have also supported the families to learn English. All of the volunteers help is very much appreciated by the families and is integral to the wider support provided. At its height the volunteer programme had around 60 volunteers supporting the families with three coordinators supporting them. Over the summer months there has been less volunteer activity reflecting the events and activities taking place on the island and acknowledging that the volunteers were giving their time for free and should get a break. Moving into the winter months once again the volunteer programme is being relaunched with both new and returning volunteers.
- 9.3 The families were asked to score how involved and active they felt they were in the community and this scored highly with 10 families scoring a 6 or a 7. There were a couple of low scores given highlighting problems with public transport at night for the families living on the edge of town. The average score given was 5.50
- 9.4 The families were asked to score how safe and welcoming the community was and this was scored 7 by every family interviewed with families saying how the island was their home and one lady saying she felt like she had been born on the island the welcome was so warm.
- 9.5 Families were finally asked to assess whether they have been able to engage in cultural and social activities which have helped them to integrate into the community and reflect the diversity of life in Scotland. The families have been able to participate in many activities since arriving from pantomimes, concerts and nativity plays at Christmas, to visits to local attractions, attending football matches, music festivals, parties, trips off island and meeting royalty. The families have also participated in craft classes, holiday activities for the children, access the facilities in the leisure centre and are regular users of the library. The families all agreed that they have been offered many opportunities and scored this highly, with the average score being 6.25 and scores ranging between 4 and 7.

10. Key issues

- 10.1 For our families and for all those supporting them there have been a number of key issues and learning points that we have picked up across the programme. A summary of "What went well?", "What could have been improved?" and "What we will do differently?" is provided in appendix 2 with information having been provided by partner agencies and volunteers. In addition the key issues are summarised below

- 10.2 Having to leave behind relatives in the Middle East has been a huge challenge for our families. Foreign travel is very difficult once families arrive in the UK and the cost of travel documents is high, in addition for all Schengen countries and the middle east an additional visa is required with no guarantee that it will be granted. Syrians tend to have large, close knit extended families living close to one another and often the extended group has fled from Syria together. We have been supporting families by submitting the details of relatives that are already registered with UNHCR to the Home Office with the hope that this will strengthen their case to be resettled in the UK. We have been successful in reuniting some extended families by bringing a further 3 families to Bute and have more applications pending a decision by UNHCR.
- 10.3 The Refugee Resettlement Group had agreed previously that preference should be given to resettle relatives as this makes it much easier to both support the families and to help them to integrate.
- 10.4 The attention of the media has been a significant intrusion into the programme and the lives of the families on Bute. The families became the “go to” refugees for every story affecting refugee resettlement in the UK and the photographs that were taken by the press when the families first arrived have been used across the world, often to the frustration and upset of the families who feared reprisal for friends and family at home as images could so easily be taken out of context. On balance the media attention has actually been more positive than negative but that does not mean that the headlines from some of the tabloid press have not been deeply hurtful causing upset within both the Syrian and local communities.
- 10.5 For the first group of families that arrived with us there was little to no cultural orientation provided on life in the UK, they weren't told where they were being resettled to and it appears that any questions that were asked of officials in the Lebanon to the availability of services and support in the UK was answered in the affirmative, almost an expectation that the streets were paved with gold. This is clearly not the case and much of the support work delivered initially was to manage the expectations that the refugees had been led to believe, often through no fault of their own. This is now largely being addressed by mandatory cultural orientation classes being delivered before families travel and preparation of a simple and factual “Welcome to Rothesay” leaflet which families receive before they arrive. On arrival families are provided with a welcome pack with material translated into Arabic covering everything from the Scottish education system, to the law in Scotland, how to prevent fire in the home and much more.
- 10.6 The law in Scotland especially around families, child protection and domestic assault is different and even though this is not widely acceptable in Syria unfortunately a culture does still exist where children are sometimes physically disciplined and wives assaulted. When dealing with these issues we have to be mindful of the cultural background and the emotional trauma that the families have been subjected to. The support team have however ensured that they have explained the zero tolerance approach that we have in the UK and local

police and social work managers gave a very informative presentation to the families. Information has also been provided in the welcome packs and families participated in an event run by police, fire and ambulance demonstrating when and how to call the emergency services.

- 10.7 Some families have said that they have sometimes find it difficult to appreciate Scottish culture and likewise for the local community and support team an awareness of Arabic and Muslim culture. This takes time, should be handled sensitively and attendance at events organised through CoSLA and delivered by the International Organisation of Migration have helped. Short informative booklets were circulated on the islands before the first families arrived.
- 10.8 There are no mosques in Argyll and Bute and prior to the families arriving some members of the refugee resettlement group were able to visit Edinburgh Central Mosque and speak with the Imam there. The families are able to use the “pop up” community centre for Friday prayers and have organised themselves, with one of the group taking on the role of Imam. Families are also able to visit the Glasgow mosque combining this with shopping trips to the city. All of the families are Sunni Muslims though some are more secular than others and not all choose to pray in the community centre. Families have also been able to participate in the Muslim festivals of Ramadan and Eid al-adha and are encouraged to support and organise their own religious needs.
- 10.9 To date it has not been possible to source halal meat on the island. However local shops are now beginning to stock other Arabic food products including flat bread, a staple of the families’ diet. Families travel to Glasgow to stock up in food especially meat but do find it difficult to bring back the quantities they need to the island. There have been several solutions suggested to address this issue and several companies have offered to deliver meat over to the island, these opportunities have not yet been taken up by the families.
- 10.10 Although the adults struggle to learn English the children are becoming fluent very quickly. For parents this has created a new concern and that is how to maintain their children’s Arabic and ensure that they not only can speak it but can read and write. This is important to maintain their own cultural identity and to keep in touch with friends and family. This issue has only recently emerged and thoughts will be given over the next weeks and months on how best to support the families with this.
- 10.11 As the refugee resettlement programme has been going for a year it is important that we keep up the momentum but acknowledge that there is a commitment to support the families over the five years of the programme. We are continually reviewing and tweaking the model of care provided. Each family has their own personal integration plan which identifies their short term issues and the support needed to resolve these, their medium term aims and the skills that the families need to resolve these and their longer term ambitions which we hope they will be able to achieve without our help. We encourage the families to be as ambitious as possible, but also to problem solve for themselves. We must be

careful with such a strong support model in place not to create dependency and we encourage independence wherever possible.

- 10.12 In August we recruited a support worker to work on the island coordinating all of the support and sharing the information and learning between all of the partner agencies. The two community interpreters report to the support worker and this ensures that there is an overview on all of the support provided and flexibility so that resource can be targeted and early intervention ensures that simple problems do not become a crisis.

11.0 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 In conclusion the evaluation of the support provided to the families is detailed in Appendix 1 and the lessons learnt from the partner agencies in Appendix 2. When families first arrived it was important that each family received the same support as they constantly compared and contrasted themselves to one another. Moving forward we have adopted a person centred model of care and each families support requirements are different.
- 11.2 The success of the refugee programme on Bute should be built on and as needs change more partners and services brought in to work with families. The Bute model has caught the attention of other authorities and agencies working with refugees. We were one of only three Scottish authorities to be evaluated by UNHCR, have been visited by Education Scotland and are looking forward to a visit from the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre who have been told about the successes at Rothesay Joint Campus.
- 11.3 The next challenge is to take the learning from this model of care and consider how we support all of our vulnerable people in Argyll and Bute and services working on the island have already started to do this.
- 11.4 Over the next few months we hope to resettle more families bringing in relatives and creating a strong and resilient Syrian community embedded in the local community. We hope that in time businesses will open and refugees will move into employment benefiting the whole economy. Whilst not everyone in the community has been involved in welcoming the new families, the strength of the islands response when two families were recently exploited by one of the tabloid papers was very heartening and the refugees themselves feel very welcomed by the community.
- 11.5 The strength of partnership working in Argyll and Bute has been integral to the success of this programme which would never have achieved what it has without the community on Bute and the commitment of the Syrian families to rebuild their lives on the island.

12.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Policy – No implications

- 12.2 Financial – Overall budget is circa £680k based on the current number of families and the budget is fully committed with a contingency in place to deal with unexpected costs
- 12.3 Legal – No implications
- 12.4 HR – A number of posts have been created on a temporary basis to support the refugee programme and funded by the Home Office grant
- 12.5 Equalities – No implications
- 12.6 Risk – No implications
- 12.7 Customer Service – Translating material into Arabic has been an important consideration to ensure refugees can access information and use local services.

Appendix 1 Evaluation interview scores

Appendix 2 Lessons Learnt report

Cleland Sneddon
Chief Executive

Cllr Dick Walsh
Council Leader

For further information contact:

Morag Brown
Business Improvement Manager, Community Services
Tel 01546 604199
Email morag.brown@argyll-bute.gov.uk

31 October 2016