
Year 2 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. This year we have repeated the self-evaluation exercise first carried out last October to seek the views of the families who have been resettled on the island on the support they receive. The report provides a comprehensive analysis against the following headings; housing, education, welfare and employability, health and integration into the community. The model of care we deliver is constantly reviewed to ensure that it best meets the needs of the families living on the Isle of Bute as they integrate into the community. The strength of the partnership working, support from the local community and the commitment to improve the lives of our Syrian families by everyone involved has driven the success of the programme.

It is recommended that the Council:

Notes the continued good work of the Refugee Resettlement Group and the local community in resettling Syrian refugees on the Isle of Bute.

Year 2 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.
- 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 include housing, education, adult learning, benefits, health and social work, Business Gateway, communications, ACHA, Fyne Homes, Police Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and from the third sector Bute Advice Centre.
- 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 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 reunion requests to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UHNCR). We have now brought in 9 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 To date we have resettled 24 families in total on Bute, 5 families have since moved from the island to join relatives elsewhere in the UK and we currently have 19 families living in Rothesay. A 20th family is expected in November 2017.
- 2.6 The project has been running for just over two years and many of our families are reaching the end of their second year of the 5 year programme. Last year we prepared an evaluation report based on feedback from the families which was presented to elected members at Council on 24 November 2016. We have repeated this self-evaluation exercise this year to help inform the

programme and support required moving forward and to update elected members and partner agencies on progress.

- 2.7 In November 2016 elected members noted the success of the programme and agreed to the resettlement of further families on Bute beyond the initial 20 family commitment. This reflected both 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.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council:

a) Notes the continued good work of the Refugee Resettlement Group and the local community in resettling Syrian refugees on the Isle of Bute.

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 first 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 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 who provides welfare and budgeting advice. The Council has appointed an Arabic speaking community interpreter, an Arabic speaking refugee support worker and recently a resettlement coordinator to provide support for day to day living and to coordinate the work of all of the agencies. These services are all funded by the grant provided by the Home Office.

- 4.3 At 31 October 2017 there are 19 refugee families resettled on Bute under the VPR scheme. This equates to 70 individuals in total; 18 men, 19 women, 20 boys and 17 girls and 4 babies born since arriving in the UK. 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.

- 4.4 Families are free to leave the local authority area they have been resettled in and should they move to another location their funding would cease to our authority, it does not however follow them. Five families have moved out with Argyll and Bute choosing to join friends and family in England.

- 4.5 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 total funding received from the Home Office as of 31 October 2017 is £1.04 million.

- 4.6 In 2016 we evaluated our Refugee Resettlement Programme to the Scottish Government's New Scot's - Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities Strategy which provides a framework and an indicator set which not only reflects the support we provide 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
- 4.7 Inviting refugee families to evaluate their support enables us to review the 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. We are also able to compare scores from last year and ensure we develop strategies to meet the needs of the families as they become more independent and integrated into their new communities.
- 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. Repeating the exercise completed last year. 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 Welfare and employability

- 5.1 On arrival all of the families are supported to make benefits claims. Support is provided by the Job Centre and a support worker from Bute Advice Centre. The majority of families are on Job Seekers Allowance, with a small number receiving Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Families also receive

housing benefit, council tax benefit and family tax credits. In addition to ensuring benefits are in place Bute Advice also provide support with budgeting and energy efficiency. As families health needs are better understood some individuals have been supported to apply for Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

- 5.2 The families were asked to score their support and understanding of benefits system and welfare support over the course of the last year or since arrival. For our earliest arrivals the focus has been on preparing these families to be more independent and manage their own affairs so considerable time is spent explaining processes to them to increase their understanding. That said benefits is a complex subject and we have had mixed success with this approach which is reflected in the scoring. The average score given this year was 4.95 with scores ranging from 1 to 7. The average score last year was 6.17. However, this also reflects a less positive approach to the overall self-evaluation exercise by some families this year and the scores given haven't always matched the comments the families gave during their interviews. Moving forward we will continue to support families to become more independent and to take ownership of their own benefits claims and any subsequent changes to them.
- 5.3 Families were next asked about their understanding and knowledge of the labour market and the potential job opportunities for them on Bute. There is an obvious tie in to language skills here and this was highlighted. Interestingly there was a range of scores from 1 to 7 with the average score being 4.29 showing a more positive outlook than last year when the average score was 3.7. Interestingly three families scored this measure a maximum 7 feeling that they are ready to embrace the job opportunities available to them.
- 5.4 The value of volunteering as a move into employment continues to be promoted and this year we have had significant uptake in volunteering opportunities by our women with 5 now volunteering in the community on a weekly basis. The women are volunteering in care and childcare settings where they are developing skills which will lead to employment in the future. The women do not appear to have the same barriers with language to volunteering as some of the men do. However that said many of the men once again volunteered at this summer's Butefest and several have volunteered at a local charity. The benefits of volunteering are huge and the we are always looking out for more opportunities as not only does this improve English and support integration but it allows them to pay back the community that have welcomed and supported them. Volunteering scored an average of 5.44 with an acknowledgment that the opportunities that have been identified so far have not suited everyone's skill set.
- 5.5 There is a very clear link between competency at English and employment. One individual with excellent English has been supported to apply for jobs but to date unfortunately hasn't yet been successful. Support is being provided by the Job Centre, Adult Learning and the support team. Another individual has been

supported by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to develop new skills and it is hopeful that this will lead to employment. We are currently running classes in employability and digital skills though not everyone is able to attend these.

- 5.6 Once again we are working with Argyll College who are currently running a Skills for Work programme made up of elements from Skills for Work: Construction Crafts National 4 with the emphasis being on learning new skills and how these skills are applied in the UK, learning technical language and health and safety. There are 8 individuals attending the 10 week course and on completion, if possible, students can be assessed for the CSCS card, a requirement if they are to work in the construction industry in the UK.
- 5.7 In September 10 Syrians took the opportunity to sit their Food Hygiene Certificate. The course was delivered over a day and 8 individuals successfully passed. Having a food hygiene certificate allows families to give consideration to and explore opportunities to open up businesses buying and selling food.
- 5.8 Moving forward the Council's Resettlement Coordinator will be preparing and implementing an employment strategy in partnership with all of the agencies involved and most importantly local employers. We will continue to help those closest to the job market to prepare CVs and complete job applications. Employability support received a mixed score with scores ranging from 1 to 7, the average score was 4.08 which is down from last year's score of 5.0. All partners acknowledge that more work is required to support the families into employment and the employment strategy will support this.
- 5.9 We continue to be successful in supporting entrepreneurship and in May this year one of the refugees opened his own business, a barber shop. He had been supported throughout the process by Business Gateway and was able to successfully apply for funding from the Kilfinnan and Noble Trusts. The business is proving to be very popular with locals and visitors to the island and attracted a significant amount of media attention. Our other start up business a patisserie and coffee shop has also successfully secured funding and the family hope to open their business in the new year.
- 5.10 Not all families have asked for or received this support but all who have, are realising that the bureaucracy in the UK is significantly greater than in Syria. Not all the business cases which were being prepared have been seen to be viable however all families should be aware that should they have a start-up business idea they would like to explore support is available. The average score for entrepreneurial support was 4.88 reflecting business ideas that weren't able to be taken forward.

6.0 Housing

- 6.1 The Registered Social Landlords on Bute, ACHA and Fyne Homes, have been able to provide appropriate housing for all of our families. 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. 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 oversees 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.
- 6.2 Televisions and TV licences are purchased for each family on arrival, TV is a very useful way of helping to learn a new language and a year's broadband is 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. Families who have now been here for over a year have arranged their own television licenses and broadband.
- 6.3 When our first two cohorts of families arrived, volunteers on Bute helped to sort out all of the many donations that had been sent to them. For all subsequent arrivals we have asked the refugee families here, and in particular their excited relatives to help us to prepare the property and to purchase a small amount of appropriate food ready to welcome new families.
- 6.4 There have been several low key housing issues which our RSL's have responded to with support from Bute Advice and the support team. For those families who have indicated a preference 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. Three families have now moved within Rothesay from the properties originally allocated to them. For those looking to leave Argyll and Bute we can provide advice but it is up to the individual families to secure their own accommodation. Once they have found accommodation and signed leases we are able to help them arrange their move. The average score for housing needs being met is 5.63, up on last year's score of 5.08, nine families scored "housing needs are met" the maximum score of 7.
- 6.5 Managing the expectations of those looking to move is sometimes a challenge and an appreciation of timescales and process can sometimes lead to frustration. Support to fully understand the housing options available to the families reflected their satisfaction with their current housing and the birth of new babies will in time mean that more families will be looking for larger accommodation. The average housing options score is 3.75 with once again a full range of scores being given and up on last year's score of 3.36.

7.0 Education and ESOL

- 7.1 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 us to deliver 8 hours per week of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision for each adult refugee in their first year of arrival. In Rothesay we exceed that requirement and deliver 8 hours of ESOL to all refugees. ESOL is delivered for SCQF levels 1 to 4 by the Council's Adult Learning Service, with qualified tutors teaching each class. During 2018 we increased the number of tutors from two to four. Our level 5 class will be being delivered by Argyll College at their Rothesay campus however many of this group are hopefully moving into employment. Our level 1 and 2 classes are gender segregated as we have relatively high numbers in these classes and this allows families to manage childcare. We are actively promoting fathers to look after their young children and attendance from women is very good. All other classes are mixed.
- 7.2 In addition to ESOL lessons the adult learning service delivers employability and computer literacy classes for those closest to the job market. We also have a fantastic group of volunteers who support families with their language either tailoring this to a specific need, addressing isolation or helping with ESOL homework. The combination of formal ESOL with our volunteer programme has seen a huge improvement in the language skills for those most able to take advantage of these opportunities.
- 7.3 Managing expectations and keeping up motivation are the key challenges for those learning English. The ESOL programme has been specifically designed to ensure the needs of all learners are met. 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.
- 7.4 Over the course of the last year students have reached SCQF accreditation with five, all women, successfully passing ESOL in Everyday Life Reading and Writing & Speaking and Listening National 2, two passing the National 3 assessment, three passing National 4 with one student passing the Speaking and Listening assessment (he is yet to sit the Reading and Writing assessment). During the last academic year four students attended West College Scotland's Greenock campus to study ESOL with the refugees from Inverclyde Council. The group of men who did this found the travel challenging but did all successfully pass their National 2 ESOL for Everyday Life Reading and Writing.
- 7.5 In the evaluation, support to achieve English language skills scored an average of 5.03, with scores ranging from 1 to 7. Low scores reflect an overall approach to this year's evaluation exercise across most indicators by a very small number of families and a difference in the learning styles by others. Some families wanted more of a focus on grammar in class, others less, some wanted books

and others preferred to learn in a more supported way with an emphasis on conversation. All of the families indicated their appreciation that over the course of the last year we had been able to increase the number of hours of ESOL available to them. The families who are putting in the most effort to attend class, do their homework, work with the volunteers and practice their English in the community scored the highest with six families giving ESOL the maximum score of 7.

- 7.6 All Syrian children over the age of 3 attend Rothesay Joint Campus. At time of writing there are 28 Syrian pupils at the school with 6 in the pre-5 unit, 13 in the primary and 9 in the secondary. The involvement of the school has very much been at the heart of the response and the support to the 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 safer and better life.
- 7.7 Additional resources have been put in place to support learning at the campus. These include additional staffing and the purchase of appropriate materials. 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. The scale of work undertaken to support pupils arriving with English as an Additional Language (EAL) has strengthened the overall provision. 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, not only the Syrian pupils but those who speak other languages too. Progress of all new pupils is continually monitored to ensure that each child is working to their full potential.
- 7.8 In the last year we have worked with Rothesay Playgroup after successfully receiving additional ESOL childcare funding from the Home Office. We now have 9 children attending the playgroup with 5 in receipt of two year old provision and 4 accessing childcare whilst their parents are at their ESOL class. Having Rothesay Playgroup included in the overall support programme and introducing younger children to their peers through play has been very beneficial to all and is supporting language development for both children and parents.
- 7.9 The education opportunities and support at Rothesay Joint Campus and Rothesay Playgroup scored very highly in the evaluation with an average score of 6.69 an increase on last year's score of 6.63. Fifteen families scored the support the highest possible score of 7.
- 7.10 The support given to families to consider and access further education opportunities was also evaluated. This measure was not relevant to all families so several score it a zero. For several refugees studying higher education in Syria their studies were abruptly brought to an end when they had to flee the country. Several have spoken about picking up their education again now that they are in the UK and one has applied for university having narrowly missed

out on gaining entry this year due to his level of English not meeting the requirement. In addition one young person is studying ESOL on the mainland with a view to applying to study engineering. All those applying for further and higher education are being supported to do so by Skills Development Scotland.

- 7.11 Argyll College are working in partnership with the programme and provided the Skills for Work programme on construction which should hopefully lead on to enrolment in other technical course at the college for those who would like to do this.
- 7.12 Acknowledging that access to further education is not something that is relevant to all of our families scores ranged from 0 to 6, with the average being 4.13. Those that had been offered information have been appreciative of it however it has been challenging to determine equivalencies for qualifications received in Syria and we are still waiting for guidance from Scottish Government and Education Scotland about this. There is also a lack of available places to study advanced ESOL full time especially within commuting distance from Rothesay. For those who have wanted to move into further and higher education they have had to explore the opportunities themselves and moving forward the partners need to improve this support both locally and nationally.

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 our first families understand 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. For those that have arrived subsequently and as a result of family reunion requests we had relied on family to explain health care to their relatives and after reviewing the comments from those families that have arrived here recently we may need to revise that approach. The average score was 5.26 down from last year's score of 5.58 and a full range of scores given.
- 8.3 Many of the families are in poor health when they arrive 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 is shared with us and passed on in turn to the relevant health professionals. This allows for 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 score for health needs being met has shown the greatest rise across all of the indicators. Last year families awarded an average score of 4.83 and this has now risen to 6.32, with eleven families scoring the maximum 7. This shows that families are seeing a real improvement in their health and although waiting times and distance to travel to hospital can still be frustrating the families were very complimentary about the health professionals who support them.

9.0 Integration into the community

- 9.1 The community on Bute continues to be welcoming and supportive. Many friendships have now developed with the local indigenous community and the new Syrian families, especially with the children. Our volunteer programme was relaunched over the course of the past year and volunteers were offered training and given background checks. Our dedicated volunteer coordinators have managed the volunteer programme since the outset and we are deeply indebted to them. The volunteers have been invaluable in helping our families develop the confidence to integrate into the wider community and to do things for themselves.
- 9.2 The families were asked to score how involved and active they felt they were in the community. The average score given was 5.50, matching the score from last year. Many of the families have embraced the opportunity to become involved once again in sport and the children and young people spoke about the extra-curricular opportunities they have at the school with the local swimming pool being a particular highlight.
- 9.3 The families were asked to score how safe and welcoming the community was and this scored highest of all with an average of 6.84. Those interviewed said the island was their home now and they are very grateful for all the support the local community gives them.
- 9.4 Over the past year the emphasis has moved from supporting bespoke events for the Syrian families on the island to which they could invite the local community to promoting local events to the families. This has been very successful for our children and young people and less so for the adults. Our young people have been able to participate in a range of programmes and activities with local organisations such as Achievement Bute and our Youth Services summer programme.
- 9.5 This summer to replace our classroom based ESOL our volunteers helped us to run an activity programme with trips and activities on and off the island which had a focus on learning English in a fun way. Trips included visits to Mount

Stuart, Colintrave, Ettrick Bay and the Transport Museum in Glasgow and activities included pitch and put and puppet making and were funded by an additional donation we received.

- 9.6 Many of the families, particularly the women, participated in the summer's programme of Sunday markets and the families embraced this opportunity taking one stall the first month and by the last Sunday market of the season the Syrian families had 3 stalls and were regularly selling out of all the food stuffs they had prepared. The men and young people very much enjoyed being involved in this year's Butefest despite the weather and the visiting funfair on the promenade also proved to be a big hit.
- 9.7 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 agreed that they have been offered opportunities, however they noted that the opportunities to participate in cultural activities from their own religion were much less having to travel to Glasgow to mark the significant Islamic festivals. The average score was 5.50 lower than last year's score of 6.25 and moving forward the support team need to get better at helping families to become confident enough to attend and arrange events and activities for themselves.

10.0 Other issues

- 10.1 Having to leave behind relatives in the Middle East has been a huge challenge for our families. Syrians tend to have large, close knit extended families living close by one another and often the extended group has fled from Syria together. We have been supporting families by helping them to prepare and submit family reunion requests to UNHCR with the hope that this will strengthen the case for their relatives to be resettled in the UK. This process only applies to those relatives that are already registered with UNHCR as refugees.
- 10.2 We had some initial success with family reunion and nine families have been successfully reunited with their relatives. However despite all families on Bute submitting a family reunion request not all have been successful and the number of families being resettled into Scotland in this way appears to have slowed down significantly. Many of the families have been deeply frustrated by the apparent lack of progress of applications by the UNHCR and despite explaining the process repeatedly and explaining that we will not be informed until an application is successful the support team and manager have borne the brunt of this frustration.
- 10.3 For the Syrian families foreign travel can be very costly as they hope to visit their families who have been resettled elsewhere in Europe and to return to visit relatives back in the Middle East. The cost of travel documents was high, however in the last few months the Home Office has allowed refugees to apply to change their status from their humanitarian visa to refugee status. This means that the families can now purchase the cheaper travel documents which

are also more widely accepted. Many of our families have opted to change their status with our support and this will have no other impact on their entitlements in the UK.

- 10.4 The attention of the media has significantly reduced over the last few months however the photographs that were taken by the press when the families first arrived are still being used to illustrate stories affecting refugee resettlement in the UK. The families have chosen to participate in two documentaries over the course of the last year which are still to be aired. The first follows one of our families as they rebuild their lives on Bute and the second was made by a team of Australian documentary makers as they looked to showcase the best resettlement programmes across the world.
- 10.5 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 Scotland and we have once again repeated the session we delivered last year where local police and social work managers gave a very informative presentation to the families. Information on this topic has also been provided in the families welcome packs.
- 10.6 This summer the families were taught CPR skills at an event run by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The families, including many of the children, had the opportunity to learn valuable lifesaving skills as well as having lots of fun and learning about fire safety at the local fire station.
- 10.7 There are no mosques in Argyll and Bute and the families have leased a local hall on Friday afternoons to allow them to hold Friday prayers and to come together as a community. The families have been able to use the hall for many different purposes from celebrations to Arabic classes.
- 10.8 Local shops are now beginning to stock Arabic food products and the families still travel to Glasgow to buy in bulk from the Asian supermarkets. A number of the men have now passed their driving test and have been able to purchase cars making travel to the mainland to shop much easier.
- 10.9 Forthcoming changes to the benefits system will provide a challenge to our families with Rothesay Job Centre preparing to transition to Universal Credit in spring 2018. Over the next few months the support team, Advice Centre and DWP will support families to understand what this means for them and with the help of Adult Learning families will be supported to develop their digital literacy. The switch to Universal Credit will be a challenge for our most vulnerable families and the support team will liaise, through COSLA, with other local authorities to determine how best to support this.

- 10.10 We are continually reviewing and tweaking the model of care we provide to our families. For those moving into their third year of provision we need to ensure that the families are more independent and to reduce their dependency on the support team and advice services. We encourage the families to be as ambitious as possible, but also to problem solve for themselves and our emerging employment strategy will help with this.
- 10.11 In October we recruited a resettlement coordinator funded by the Home Office to work on the island coordinating all of the support and sharing the information and learning between all of the partner agencies. The post holder will assume the operational responsibility for the programme from the Business Improvement Manager over the next few months. The community interpreter and Arabic speaking support worker both report to the resettlement coordinator 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 provides us with an opportunity to evaluate the support programme and to ensure the support we provide moving forward meets both the needs and aspirations of our families. We operate a person centred model of care acknowledging that no two family's needs are the same.
- 11.2 The success of the refugee programme on Bute should be built on and as needs change the partners and services working with the families will change. It is very important when providing such a comprehensive programme of support that we do not create dependency and all of our families are encouraged and supported to be as independent as possible as ultimately the support will be time limited.
- 11.3 The Bute model has caught the attention of other authorities and agencies working with refugees. Last year we were one of only three Scottish authorities to be evaluated by UNHCR, we were also visited by Education Scotland and a delegation from the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre who both highlighted the good practice at Rothesay Joint Campus in their written reports. The resettlement programme was selected as one of the top finalists in the APSE Service Awards 2017. And this year we have participated in an evaluation by Deloitte and are preparing for a visit by Clackmannanshire Council in the next few weeks.
- 11.4 The support team continue to receive support from COSLA who have taken on the role of Strategic Migration Partnership for Scotland. The advice and support the team at COSLA provide and the opportunity to meet up with the local authorities participating in the scheme on a 6 weekly basis has been invaluable.
- 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 support of 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 – Funding is received from the Home Office 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

Ann Marie Knowles
Acting Executive Director Community Services

Cllr Aileen Morton
Council Leader

For further information contact:

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

30 October 2017