

Year 3 Evaluation Of The Argyll and Bute Refugee Resettlement Programme

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council agreed to resettle Syrian refugee families through the Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in 2015. We have supported 28 families to date to rebuild their lives on the island of Bute. Once again we have repeated the self-evaluation exercise carried out in 2016 and 2017 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; learning English, welfare support, employability and entrepreneurialism, education, housing, health, understanding the law, cultural, social and leisure activities and feeling safe.
- 1.2 The model of care we deliver is constantly reviewed to ensure that it best meets the needs of the families living on the island of Bute as they integrate into the community. Throughout the past year the focus of the programme has been on delivering our employability strategy and there have been notable successes especially with the opening of small businesses.
- 1.3 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, continues to drive the success of the programme.

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 island of Bute.
- b) Agrees to continue to resettle refugees, on the island of Bute, through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme until the close of the current programme, likely to be in 2020.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Refugee Resettlement Programme in Argyll and Bute commenced in December 2015 when our first Syrian refugee families were resettled on the Island of Bute. We have continued to resettle families and this report is the third annual evaluation of the programme, informed by the feedback of the families rebuilding their lives in Argyll and Bute.
- 2.2 The refugees arriving in Argyll and Bute are resettled through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. This scheme is managed and funded by the Home Office and aims to meet the commitment of the UK Government to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020.
- 2.3 Argyll and Bute's 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, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Argyll College, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Bute Advice Centre.
- 2.4 The Refugee Resettlement Group agreed in 2015 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 such as community support were also taken into account but these three were the primary factors.
- 2.5 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 10 families through this route and reuniting families has had a hugely positive effect on our families and makes the delivery of support significantly easier.
- 2.6 To date we have resettled 28 families in total on Bute. 8 families have subsequently moved from the island either to join relatives elsewhere in the UK or for employment and we currently have 21 families living in Rothesay. 1 family has recently chosen to move to the island after initially being resettled in another part of the UK.

2.7 Our phase one families are now reaching the end of their third year of the 5 year programme. In autumn 2016 and 2017 we prepared an evaluation report based on feedback from the families which was presented to elected members at the November Council meetings. 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.

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 Island of Bute.
- b) Agrees to continue to resettle refugees, on the Island of Bute, through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme until the close of the current programme, likely to be in 2020.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Refugees arriving in the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) Scheme are entitled to a 5 year refugee visa which allows them access to benefits and the ability to work in the UK.

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 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 1 October 2018 there are 21 refugee families resettled on Bute under the SVPR scheme. This equates to 92 individuals in total; 21 men, 21 women, 29 boys and 21 girls (8 babies have been 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.

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. Eight families have moved outwith Argyll and Bute choosing to join family or seeking employment elsewhere in the UK.

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:

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| 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 30 September 2018 is £1.36 million.

- 4.6 In 2016 and 2017 we evaluated our Refugee Resettlement Programme against the Scottish Government's New Scot's - Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities Strategy. This strategy was updated by the Scottish Government and partner agencies in January this year. The refreshed New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-22 promotes a model similar to that of our own. The five principles which form the New Scots strategy and our own approach are:
- Integration from day one
 - A rights based approach
 - Refugee Involvement
 - Inclusive communities
 - Partnership and Collaboration.
- 4.7 The New Scots 2018-22 overarching outcomes are:
- Refugees and asylum seekers live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities and are able to build diverse relationships and connections.
 - Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.
 - Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-coordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
 - Policy, strategic planning and legislation, which have an impact on refugees and asylum seekers, are informed by their rights, needs and aspirations.
- 4.8 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: learning English, welfare support, employability and entrepreneurialism, education, housing, health, understanding the law, cultural, social and leisure activities and feeling safe. We are also able to compare scores from previous year and ensure we develop policies and strategies informed by our families to meet their needs as they become less dependent on support and more integrated into their new communities.
- 4.9 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 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 Learning English

- 5.1 All of the families are supported to learn English and for the majority of our 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 aim to deliver 8 hours of ESOL to all refugees. ESOL is delivered for beginners and SCQF levels 2 and 3 by the Council's Adult Learning Service, with qualified tutors teaching each class.
- 5.2 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. The combination of formal ESOL with our volunteer programme has seen an improvement in the language skills for those most able to take advantage of these opportunities.
- 5.3 Managing expectations and keeping up motivation continue to be 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. The Adult Learning team regularly assess the learning needs, level of attainment and provision and class material is tailored accordingly.
- 5.4 In the evaluation, support to achieve English language skills scored an average of 5.39. This was an improvement on last year's score of 5.03 with scores ranging from 2 to 7. Low scores reflect a frustration with mixed level classes. Seven families scored support for learning English the maximum score of 7.
- 5.5 Our Autumn 2018 programme attempts to address these issues and the ESOL programme now comprises 6 week blocks of topic focused learning. Classes are split by ability and learning style, both equally important for students to progress. Short assessments will take place at the end of each block, consolidating the learning before moving on to the next topic.
- 5.6 In addition we are delivering a mother and baby English class with a classroom environment specially designed to meet the needs of our new mums. This is the only class where babies attend and the feedback has been positive.
- 5.7 We have been awarded additional funding from the Home Office for childcare for the second year. This has enabled us to partner once again with Rothesay Playgroup and arrange childcare for our older babies and toddlers whilst parents attend their ESOL class. This has been very well received by parents and tutors

alike. Whilst we welcome small babies to our classes, older and increasing vocal and mobile ones can be disruptive.

- 5.8 This year we asked families if they felt they were able to use the English they had learnt in the community. We wanted to get a sense of independence and identify any barriers which could lead to a lack of confidence. Scores here ranged from 2 to 7 with the average being 4.55. Once again women seemed more confident to use their English than men with their fear of failure being less. Many felt they were hesitant to talk as they couldn't use complete sentences. Frequent comments related to the speed at which Scots talk and accents which are hard to understand.

6.0 Welfare Support

- 6.1 On arrival all of the families are supported to make benefits claims. Support is provided by Jobcentre Plus staff and a support worker from Bute Advice Centre. The majority of families are on Job Seekers Allowance, with a small number receiving Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP). Families also receive housing benefit, council tax benefit and child tax credits. Every family who has had a child has received assistance to apply for Healthy Start Vouchers. In addition to ensuring benefits are in place Bute Advice also provide support with budgeting and energy efficiency.

- 6.2 It is important that families understand the benefits process. We asked them if they have been supported to understand their rights to welfare support and the benefits they receive. The average score given this year was 6.25, with scores ranging from 4 to 7. The average score last year was 4.95. Twelve families scored the maximum 7 points indicating success in supporting families to become more independent, to take ownership of their own benefits claims and make any subsequent changes to them.

- 6.3 Universal Credit will be introduced into Argyll and Bute from autumn 2018. This has required careful planning and preparations are in place. Families will transfer onto Universal Credit if their circumstances change and any new arrivals will receive the single benefit if they have 2 or fewer children.

7.0 Moving into Employment

- 7.1 Over the past 18 months we have been developing and implementing our employability strategy with our partner agencies and local businesses. In this year's self-evaluation we asked three questions relating to employment.
- 7.2 The first looking at developing the skills for work and asking families if they have been supported to participate in volunteering opportunities or work experience should they wish to. The average score was 5.25, a decrease on last year's score of 5.44. Although still positive, this shows we still have some work to do to

identify opportunities which meet the expectations of our families and enable them to develop the skills to secure employment.

- 7.3 We continue to have success with women engaging in volunteer programmes. They have taken up opportunities volunteering with a national charity and in both care and childcare settings. The men have engaged in a range of different programmes including work experience with a local food outlet, a mentoring programme with Scottish Fire and Rescue, have helped out in local charity shops and several once again volunteered at Butefest.
- 7.4 We next asked families to evaluate the support we have provided to allow them to access employment, asking have you been supported to apply for jobs or are you aware of the support that is available for this locally. The average score here was 5.0 an increase on the past years scores of 4.29 and 3.7. This shows an increased confidence in the opportunities available and the support available locally.
- 7.5 Whilst there has been some success with 2 adults securing full time and part time employment unfortunately neither of these opportunities have turned out to be permanent and families have had to move back on to benefits.
- 7.6 Working in partnership with our resettlement team, Adult Learning and Jobcentre Plus are able to match the wide range of skills and experience that our refugees bring with them to local employment opportunities. Support to prepare CVs, search for job vacancies and complete applications is provided at Work Club. Fyne Homes, seeing an opportunity to develop the interviewing skills of their staff, have provided support with mock interviews.
- 7.7 Seven of the men have successfully completed a “Skills for Work” course with Argyll College. This bespoke course allowed refugees with an interest in working in the construction industry to learn technical skills and UK construction methods. They developed a much greater understanding and use of technical language and an appreciation of health and safety requirements. The course will be followed up with the opportunity to complete the assessment for their CSCS card enabling them to work on construction sites in the UK.
- 7.8 We continue to be successful in supporting start-up businesses with three now open. The Orient Salon Syrian barber shop successfully completed its first year in business and has been joined by Helmi’s Patisserie and Rayan’s Syrian Takeaway. Business Gateway have been able to offer advice and support to apply for funding from the Kilfinnan and Noble Trusts.
- 7.9 Planning and regulatory services have been able to meet with the families early on in the process and discuss their business plans. This has been helpful in overcoming cultural differences and an understanding of the process and length of time taken to apply for the relevant permissions. Local

environmental health officers and planners explained the legislation, the application process and requirements for each business, to ensure the complexities became better understood thereby avoiding costly and time consuming re-submissions.

- 7.10 We asked the families if they were aware of the support available to develop entrepreneurial skills and set up business in Argyll and Bute. 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. The average score for entrepreneurial support was 4.45 with a range of scores given. From the comments it is apparent that families are disappointed to realise that all ideas don't necessarily turn into viable businesses and there is a significant amount of work to do before a project gets off the ground. Perhaps our three successful businesses have increased expectations and made the process look easy.

8.0 Education

- 8.1 All Syrian children over the age of 3 attend Rothesay Joint Campus. At time of writing there are 37 Syrian pupils at the school with 7 in the pre-5 unit, 21 in the primary and 9 in the secondary. The involvement of the school has very much been at the heart of the support to the families, reflecting the school's role in the community and acknowledging that the decisions the families made to come to the UK were to afford their children a safer and better life.
- 8.2 Additional resources have been put in place to support learning at the campus funded by the Home Office grant. These include additional staffing and the purchase of appropriate materials. Educational Psychology 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.
- 8.3 Families were very appreciative of the efforts being made to secure an Arabic teacher who will help their children maintain and develop literacy in their native language. The Syrian pupils continue to progress well with learning English however this should not come at the cost of losing their Arabic. Our aim is for multicultural and bilingual students.
- 8.4 We continue to work with Rothesay Playgroup after successfully receiving additional ESOL childcare funding from the Home Office for the second year. We have 7 children attending the playgroup with 5 in receipt of 1,140 hours two year old provision and 2 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.

- 8.5 The increase in free pre-school education to 1,140 hours was introduced on Bute in January 2018. This has proved to be a very popular with the Syrian families with the majority of parents taking advantage of the increased provision on offer.
- 8.6 The education opportunities and support at Rothesay Joint Campus and Rothesay Playgroup scored highly in the evaluation with an average score of 6.29. This however was down slightly on the previous year's scores of 6.69 and 6.63. Fourteen families did score the support the highest possible score of 7. One family commented on subject choices and another complained that the use of mobile phones in the secondary prevented young people from concentrating fully in class. Academically the young people have had some success and there are now two studying full time at university and college.
- 8.7 This year we asked parents if their children had had the opportunity to participate in the extra-curricular activities with their school. Many spoke highly of the activities on offer and Syrian young people are active in the community participating in a range of sporting activities. Families scored this an average of 6.50. Families also commented positively on the wide variety of school trips that their children had been on both on and off the island.

9.0 Housing

- 9.1 We work closely with the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) on Bute, ACHA and Fyne Homes who have been able to provide appropriate housing for all of our families. Each family has signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement with the RSLs which offers a 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. Each child is welcomed to their new bedroom by a toy box full of donated toys to help them to settle in.
- 9.2 Televisions and TV licences are purchased for each family on arrival for the first year. 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.
- 9.3 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 relatives, to help us to prepare the property and to purchase a small amount of appropriate food ready to welcome new families.

- 9.4 There have been several low key housing issues which our RSLs 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. 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.
- 9.5 We asked families if they had been supported to develop an understanding of the housing options available to them in the UK. Managing the expectations of those looking to move is sometimes a challenge and an appreciation of timescales and process can lead to frustration. The arrival of new babies has meant that several families are now looking for larger accommodation. The average housing options score was 4.20 an increase on the previous scores of 3.75 and 3.36.

10.0 Healthcare

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 Families were asked if they have been supported to develop an understanding of the model of health care in Scotland. The average score was 6.00, a substantial increase from last year's score of 5.26. Eleven families scored this a maximum 7 and those who were dissatisfied were frustrated about waiting times and travel costs to the mainland for hospital appointments.
- 10.3 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. Primary care is delivered on island

and the majority of secondary care is provided off island in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.

- 10.4 Families were also asked if their health needs had been met. The average score for last year was 6.32, with eleven families scoring the maximum 7. This year's score slightly lower 6.18 with eight families scoring the maximum 7. Families are seeing a real improvement in their health though distance to travel to hospital and telephone interpreters can still cause frustration. Families were very complimentary about the health professionals who support them.

11.0 Understanding the Law

- 11.1 This year for the first time we asked families if they have you been supported to understand UK /Scottish Law and social responsibilities in the UK. The law in Scotland, especially around families, child protection and domestic assault is different and there are evident cultural differences to those issues in Syria. 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 last year we repeated the session where local police and social work managers gave a very informative presentation to the families. Information on this topic is also provided in the families welcome packs.

- 11.2 Many adults have now passed their UK driving test. Road traffic laws are included in the theory test and our families are very keen to learn the Highway Code. Passing their driving test and being able to purchase a car has opened up additional employment opportunities.

- 11.3 In answering this question families were keen to ask about their own rights and spoke positively about the support from the police. The average score for having been supported to understand UK /Scottish Law and social responsibilities in the UK was 4.97 with a full range of scores given.

12.0 Leisure Activities

- 12.1 In previous years we have asked if families were involved and active in the community. This year we amended the question slightly and asked if you are able to participate in sports or other leisure activities in the community. The average score given was 6.13. 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 leisure centre being very popular.

- 12.2 The community on Bute continues to be welcoming and supportive. Many friendships have now developed between the local indigenous community and the new Syrian families, especially with the children. Our volunteer programme

though smaller is still invaluable in helping our families develop the confidence to integrate into the wider community and to do things for themselves.

13.0 Cultural and Social Activities

13.1 Families were asked if they felt that they are able to engage in social and cultural activities which reflects the diversity of the population Scotland. The average score of 5.68 is an increase on last year's score of 5.50 and the biggest source of frustration remains having to travel to Glasgow to mark the significant Islamic festivals. Moving forward we hope that the families will feel more empowered and able to arrange events and activities for themselves locally with support where appropriate.

14.0 Safe and Welcomed

14.1 In our final question we asked families to score how safe and welcoming the community was and this once again scored highest of all with an average of 6.85, last year's score was 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.

15.0 CONCLUSION

15.1 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.

15.2 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.

15.3 Refugees resettled through the SVPR scheme are able to apply to the Home Office for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). The application should be made in the last month of their current refugee visa and there is no fee. Applicants will continue to have the same rights and entitlements until a decision about ILR is made (so long as the application is submitted before their visa expires).

15.4 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 continues to be invaluable.

15.5 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.

16.0 IMPLICATIONS

16.1 Policy – No implications

16.2 Financial – Funding is received from the Home Office and the budget is fully committed with a contingency in place to deal with unexpected costs

16.3 Legal – No implications

16.4 HR – A number of posts have been created on a temporary basis to support the refugee programme and funded by the Home Office grant

16.5 Equalities – No implications

16.6 Risk – No implications

16.7 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

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