
Year 4 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 support refugee families to rebuild their lives on the island of Bute. This year we have repeated the self-evaluation exercise carried out in 2016, 2017 and 2018 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 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 with adults securing employment and partaking in a range of work experience and volunteering opportunities. For families that arrived in the earlier part of the programme, the support arrangements are now moving towards increasing independence and this is reflected in the feedback received.
- 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) Notes the Council continues to resettle refugees, on the Island of Bute, through the Home Office's rebranded Refugee Resettlement Scheme.

28 NOVEMBER 2019

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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 fourth 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 (SVPR) Scheme. This scheme is managed and funded by the Home Office.
- 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 Resettlement team, Education, Community Learning, Health and Social Work, Business Gateway, ACHA, Fyne Homes, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Bute Advice Centre.
- 2.4 To date we have resettled 31 families in total on Bute. 13 families have subsequently moved from the island either to join relatives elsewhere in the UK or for employment and we currently have 18 families, 76 individuals, living in Rothesay.
- 2.5 Our phase one families are now reaching the end of their fourth year of the 5 year programme. Families have been granted Refugee Status for 5 years. Once this visa ends they will be entitled to apply for settlement in the UK and if their application is successful, they will be granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in the UK. Once they have ILR, they may meet the requirements to apply to become a British citizen after a further 12 months. For families that arrived in the earlier part of the programme, the support arrangements are now moving towards increasing independence and this is reflected in the feedback received.
- 2.6 In June 2019 the UK Government reaffirmed its commitment to the resettlement of refugees post 2020 when the current SVPR programme is due to end. The UK Government's priority will be to continue to resettle the most vulnerable refugees under a newly rebranded Refugee Resettlement Scheme. Argyll and Bute Council continues to offer resettlement opportunities through this programme.

2.7 In autumn 2016, 2017 and 2018 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) Notes the Council continues to resettle refugees, on the Island of Bute, through the Home Office's rebranded Refugee Resettlement Scheme.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Refugees arriving in the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation (SVPR) 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 a Resettlement Team of Arabic speaking Support Workers who provide support for day to day living and to coordinate the work of all of the agencies. These services and staff costs are all funded by the grant provided by the Home Office.

4.3 At 1 October 2019 there are 18 refugee families resettled on Bute under the SVPR scheme. This equates to 76 individuals in total; 16 men, 17 women, 20 boys and 16 girls (7 babies have been born since arriving in the UK). Babies born in Scotland are granted the refugee status of their parents.

4.4 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 30 September 2019 is £1.7 million.

- 4.5 In previous years we have evaluated our Refugee Resettlement Programme against the Scottish Government's New Scot's - Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities Strategy. 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.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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: 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.
- 4.8 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 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 ESOL is delivered by the Council's Community Learning team.
- 5.2 This year the focus of our ESOL programme has been to support our refugees move into meaningful employment. Classes have a focus on the language and

skills for work. The beginners' class continues to follow the "ESOL for Everyday Life" curriculum.

- 5.3 Once again we have been awarded additional funding from the Home Office for childcare. This has enabled us to partner 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.
- 5.4 This year we have also been successful in receiving funding from the Scottish Refugee Council to deliver a peer mentoring programme where language and culture can be shared. This programme is underway supported by our ESOL tutors and community volunteers.
- 5.5 In the evaluation, support to achieve English language skills scored an average of 4.17, lower than last year's score of 5.39. Low scores reflect a frustration with mixed level classes and having different tutors across the week. We continue to revise the programme and moving forward we will ensure that we keep tutor changes to a minimum.
- 5.6 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 1 to 6.6 with the average being 4.39 with some criticism that our focus on language for work has prevented the refugees from learning a more varied vocabulary. Once again women seemed more confident to use their English than men with their fear of failure being less.

6.0 Welfare Support

- 6.1 On arrival all of the families are supported to make benefits claims by Bute Advice Centre and the Job Centre Plus. 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 5.19, the average score last year was 6.25. Families are being expected to be more independent and to take ownership of their own benefits claims and make any subsequent changes to them, some are finding this more challenging than others.
- 6.2 Universal Credit has been introduced into Argyll and Bute and families have transitioned over to this benefit as and when their circumstances change. For example when they have moved into part time employment or if there have been changes in the size of the family. Families find Universal Credit challenging and do require additional support.

7.0 Moving into Employment

- 7.1 Over the past two years 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 5.47, an increase on last year's score of 5.25. Unexpectedly those who have already secured work gave a lower score to this question which may reflect a simple misunderstanding. The average score of those who have been able to take advantage of our employability programme in the past year was 6.46.
- 7.3 We continue to have success with adults engaging in a range of volunteering opportunities, they have taken up opportunities volunteering in local charity shops and in both care and childcare settings. Work experience opportunities have been arranged with a variety of local businesses some leading to successful employment.
- 7.4 We have arranged several training courses this year including Food Hygiene and Health and Safety. Several adults attended and passed the H&S Level 1 course which means they can now sit the CSCS test which will allow them to work on a building site.
- 7.5 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 6.22 a significant increase on the past years' scores of 5.00, 4.29 and 3.7. This shows an increased confidence in the opportunities available, the employability strategy and the approach taken by the partnership.
- 7.6 We continue to be successful in supporting start-up businesses with three now open. Business Gateway continue to offer ongoing support to these businesses. Two other business start-ups are being planned.
- 7.7 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 4.00 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.

8.0 Education

- 8.1 All Syrian children over the age of 3 attend Rothesay Joint Campus. At time of writing there are 34 Syrian pupils at the school with 7 in the pre-5 unit, 21 in the

primary and 6 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 We continue to work with Rothesay Playgroup after successfully receiving additional ESOL childcare funding from the Home Office for a third year. We have 6 children attending the playgroup with 3 in receipt of 1,140 hours two year old provision and 3 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.
- 8.4 The education opportunities and support at Rothesay Joint Campus and Rothesay Playgroup scored an average of 5.83 a slight decrease in the previous year's scores 6.29, 6.69 and 6.63. Five families did score the support the highest possible score of 7.
- 8.5 This year we asked parents if their children had had the opportunity to participate in the extra-curricular activities with their school. Families scored this an average of 5.69. Families commented positively on the variety of school trips that their children had been on both on and off the island.

9.0 Housing

- 9.1 We continue to 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. 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.

9.2 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 this year is 4.40 and this score has increased year on year as families gain experience and develop a greater understanding of options for housing.

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 appointments has meant that responding to health needs can be both challenging 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 5.53 a reduction on last year's score of 6.00. Several families commented on the lack of choice or the ability to gain a second opinion from health care professionals.

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. 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 6.18, with eleven families scoring the maximum 7. This year's score is slightly lower 5.81 with seven 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 continue to be complimentary about the health professionals who support them.

11.0 Understanding the Law

11.1 This year we asked families, once again, if they have 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. Information on these 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 4.69 with a full range of scores given.

12.0 Leisure Activities

12.1 We asked families if they are able to participate in sports or other leisure activities in the community. The average score given was 4.10 a reduction on last year's score of 6.13. Many of the families expressed their disappointment that the swimming pool has been closed for much of the past year for refurbishment. Families did talk positively about the programme of activities in the library with Book Bug a favourite.

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.

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 in Scotland. The average score of 5.04 which is a decrease on last year's score of 5.68. This year we helped the families organise an event for the wider community to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr. The event was well attended by the families and wider community and the families were very grateful for the support. Moving forward we hope that the families will feel more empowered and able to arrange events and activities for themselves.

14.0 Safe and Welcomed

14.1 In our final question we asked families to score how safe and welcoming the community was and for the fourth consecutive year this question scored highest of all with an average of 6.72, last year's score was 6.85. Those interviewed said the island was their home now and they are very grateful for all the support

the local community gives them. Thirteen families scored this question the highest possible 7, with several asking if they could award a higher score.

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 Across all of the interviews scores a number have been lower than in previous years. It is noted that many families are now being transitioned to a greater level of independence which changes the support they receive. It is not certain from the feedback as to why some scores reduced but it could just be an overall reduction in optimism bias or a reluctance by families to be more independent.
- 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 Fairer Scotland Duty

16.5.1 Equalities – protected characteristics

All staff working with refugee families have received Equalities training.

16.5.2 Socio-economic duty

No implications

16.5.3 Islands

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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Chief Executive

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