

Refugee Resettlement

Policy Development

This paper updates the Board on progress made by local authorities to support refugees through the UK Government's resettlement schemes and seeks agreement that councils' support for the schemes should continue going forward.

Summary and Recommendations

Scottish local authorities have been playing a central role in resettling refugees through both the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) and the Vulnerable Children's Relocation Scheme (VCRS). This paper provides the Board with an update on work done to date and seeks endorsement for councils' continued involvement in both schemes.

The Board is invited to:

- i. Note the excellent progress that has been made across Scotland in resettling refugees through the SRP and the VCRS;
- ii. Note that COSLA has published an Elected Member Briefing which provides further details on the role that local authorities are playing in relation to humanitarian protection; and
- iii. Agree that councils continue their involvement in resettlement going forward.

References

Previous reports covering refugee resettlement:

- COSLA Leaders May 2016 – Accommodating Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- COSLA Leaders August 2016 – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children
- Community Well-being Executive Group March 2017 – Elected Member Briefing on Humanitarian Protection Schemes and the Role of Scottish Local Government

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1. This paper updates the Board on progress made by local authorities to support refugees through the UK Government's resettlement schemes and seeks agreement that councils' support for the schemes should continue going forward.

Current COSLA Position

2. The UK has committed to resettling 20,000 refugees through the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) and a further 3,000 people through the Vulnerable Children's Relocation Scheme (VCRS). Scottish local authorities are aiming to resettle 10% of the UK's total commitment by the end of the current UK Parliament.
3. Further details on both schemes have been set out in previous papers to Council Leaders and the former Community Well-being Executive Group. An [Elected Member Briefing \(PDF\)](#) has also been issued which outlines the approach that councils are taking in relation to both schemes, and to humanitarian protection more generally. Board members are encouraged to read this briefing in particular as it provides a broad overview of the approach being taken in Scotland.
4. Excellent progress has been made by Scottish local authorities in supporting both the SRP and the VCRS. Over 1,850 refugees have now been resettled across 31 local authorities through the SRP – this represents over 20% of the total number of refugees resettled across the UK through the scheme. Progress with the VCRS has been somewhat slower across the UK, but Scottish councils have still resettled a disproportionate number of people through this scheme (currently around 70 people which, again, is over 20% of the total number of people who have been resettled across the UK through this scheme).

What is changing?

5. It is anticipated that our target of resettling 2,000 refugees through the SRP will be reached by late 2017 / early 2018. Given that Scottish local authorities had been collectively working towards this target, it is an appropriate time to update the Board on the progress that has been made to date, and to seek members' endorsement for Scottish councils' ongoing involvement going forward.

Proposed COSLA Position and Next Steps

6. While it will be a major achievement to reach the target of resettling 2,000 people through the SRP, a significant number of local authorities are committed to continuing to receive refugees over the coming years. As such, it is proposed that councils are able to continue in their resettlement efforts – whether in relation to the SRP, or the VCRS, or both – notwithstanding the initial target for the SRP having been met.
7. Should the Board's endorsement be provided, COSLA will relay this to the resettlement team within UK Government confirming that resettlement to Scotland through both schemes can continue until or unless either is ended or Scottish local authorities feel that they are no longer able to support any more families through the scheme.

8. While it is proposed that this should be the collective position of Scottish local government, individual council decisions on their ongoing involvement in resettlement will of course continue to be matters that are decided locally by each council.

Summary and Recommendations

9. Scottish local authorities have been playing a central role in resettling refugees through both the SRP and the VCRS. This paper provides the Board with an update on work done to date and seeks endorsement for councils' continued involvement in both schemes.
10. The Board is invited to:
 - i. Note the excellent progress that has been made across Scotland in resettling refugees through the SRP and the VCRS;
 - ii. Note that COSLA has published an Elected Member Briefing which provides details on the role that local authorities are playing in relation to humanitarian protection; and
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