

# SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA



To the Members of the Executive

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Executive to be held in the Council Chamber, Pippbrook, Dorking on **TUESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2015 at 7.00pm** for the transaction of the business set out in the previously circulated agenda and the following supplementary agenda.

16<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Angela Griffiths  
Corporate Head of Service

<b>10.</b>	<b>Urgent Items</b> The Chairman has agreed that the following item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, to enable the Council to provide the support indicated in the report as quickly as possible. In accordance with Access to Information Procedure Rule 14, the agreement of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee that the taking of the decision is urgent and cannot be reasonably deferred has been obtained.	-
<b>11.</b>	<b>Syrian Refugees Vulnerable Persons Relocation Programme</b> The Executive is asked to agree that Mole Valley District Council confirms to the Home Office that it will participate in the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Programme for Syrian Refugees for five years and that a maximum of five households will be assisted per year. <b>Executive Member:</b> Councillor Vivienne Michael <b>Corporate Priorities:</b> Community Wellbeing & Prosperity	3



## Agenda Item 11

<b>Executive Member</b>	Councillor Vivienne Michael
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<b>Date</b>	20 October 2015

<b>Ward (s) affected</b>	All	<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
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<b>Subject</b>	Syrian Refugee Vulnerable Persons Relocation Programme
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### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to agree that Mole Valley District Council confirms to the Home Office that it will participate in the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Programme for Syrian Refugees for five years and that a maximum of five households will be assisted per year.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In response to the conflict in Syria the Prime Minister on 7 September, announced a significant extension of the existing Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) Scheme for Syrian Refugees and further detail has followed on the extension of funding for the scheme. The Government intends to resettle up to 20,000 refugees based in refugee camps in Syria's neighbouring countries over the next five years.
- An explanation of the current VPR scheme is set out below and the Home Offices' latest fact sheet is attached at Appendix 1.
- The scheme aims to provide a structured and phased programme of resettlement for the most vulnerable refugees. Government funding is available through the scheme for a refugee's resettlement costs for accommodation, integration support, health and education for the first 12 months and beyond where needed.
- Local authorities that agree to participate in the scheme may specify their preference to the Home Office regarding the size and characteristics of refugee households that they may be able to accommodate and support.

- It is proposed, that given the extent of the Syrian refugee crisis, Mole Valley District Council (MVDC), in partnership with Surrey County Council, appropriate Clinical Commission Groups (CCGs) and the voluntary and faith sectors makes a positive contribution by committing to participate in the VPR scheme.
- Taking into account the housing pressures in the area it is proposed that a maximum of five refugee households are assisted per year over the five years of the VPR scheme, making a total of 25 households to be assisted. The first households would probably arrive in the first half of 2016.
- The proposed preference for the size and characteristics of refugee households to be assisted per year are:
  - two families with working age parent/parents and have one or two dependent children who are under 18 years old;
  - one single adult female; and
  - two either single or couple households who are over 55.

## **CORPORATE PRIORITY OUTCOMES**

### **PROSPERITY**

- **A vibrant local economy with thriving towns and villages**
  - The resettlement of refugee households in MVDC will add to the diversity of the area and the households will have the opportunity in the long term to contribute to the local economy through employment and voluntary work.

### **COMMUNITY WELLBEING**

#### **Active communities and support for those who need it**

- **Improve opportunities for residents to live active lives.**
- **Promote community spirit, encourage individuals, families and communities to be support each other and help our neighbourhoods to be more resilient in times of need.**
  - Refugee households will need help and support to integrate within the local community and to improve their overall wellbeing. This presents opportunities across the local community to welcome and support refugee households and work closely together to promote community spirit.

## **The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendations**

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Home Secretary launched the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPR) for Syrian Refugees in January 2014, and invited all local authorities in the UK to participate. A limited number of authorities joined and the first refugees arrived in the UK in March 2014. As of June 2015, 216 refugees had been resettled. MVDC has not participated in this early scheme.
- 1.2 In response to the conflict in Syria the Prime Minister on 7 September, announced a significant extension of the existing VPR scheme and further detail has followed on additional funding for the scheme. The Government intends to resettle up to 20,000 refugees based in refugee camps in Syria's neighbouring countries over the next five years. It does not intend to offer resettlement to Syrian refugees already in Europe, or to participate in the European Union's proposed refugee resettlement and relocation scheme.
- 1.3 It has asked local authorities for an 'in principle' number of Syrian refugees that could be resettled, with an indication of types (families large/small or individual adults) and rate of arrival over five years. No area is being asked to take more refugees than it can appropriately support.
- 1.4 The Local Government Association (LGA) is coordinating offers to resettle Syrian refugees via the existing Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships. Guidance from the LGA is that councils in two tier areas should work closely on agreeing any offers of support. So far, in principle pledges in the South East equate to 150 households per year for the region.
- 1.5 In Surrey the County, boroughs, districts, health and faith sector have formed a partnership to ensure that support is planned and coordinated for refugee households that may be resettled in the area. That partnership will have the benefit of the overview on numbers of households assisted and will monitor the impact of the VPR scheme on local services.
- 1.6 The Government has provided advice on the gov.uk website to advise the general public on how they can help and support Syrian refugee. It signposts the public to a Red Cross dedicated phone line as well as other international agencies providing relief efforts.
- 1.7 An explanation of the VPR scheme is set out below and the Home Office's latest fact sheet is attached at Appendix 1.

### **2.0 The Syrian Refugee Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) Scheme**

- 2.1 The scheme aims to provide a structured and phased programme of resettlement for the most vulnerable refugees living in camps on the borders of Syria. Selection is based on the following criteria: 'women and girls at risk; survivors of violence and/or torture; refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; children and adolescents at risk; persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement countries'.

- 2.2 The first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs incurred by a local authority for accommodation and integration support, and education can be claimed from the scheme. To ensure local authorities can plan ahead and continue to respond the Government will provide additional funding to assist with costs incurred in future years and will endeavour to provide certainty by working closely with local authorities on the draw down process. Guideline figures provided so far indicate that £8,500 per refugee may be available with additional amounts for the education of children. Health costs are dealt with separately. Refugees will have recourse to public funds once their immigration status has been confirmed and this is explained in the section below on the 'operational processes of the VPR scheme.
- 2.3 Local authorities that agree to participate may assess the existing needs and resources of their areas and specify their preference to the Home Office on the size and characteristics of refugee households that their area may be able to accommodate and support.

### **3.0 The Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme – The Operational Process**

3.1 The operational process is described below.

- The government has set the criteria for the selection of refugees and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) then identifies and submits potential cases for consideration by the Home Office. Cases are screened and some may be rejected on security, war crimes or other grounds.
- Once the screening process has been completed a full medical assessment is conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the refugee's host country.
- At this point the full details of the case and medical history are sent to the participating local authority for assessment of need, including consideration of whether suitable accommodation and support are available locally. The local authority is asked to accept or reject cases.
- Eligibility is then confirmed and the IOM starts the visa application process. On arrival, arrangements are made for Biometric Residence Permits to be issued to the refugees with five years humanitarian protection. National Insurance numbers are also issued and this enables those resettled to look for work and claim welfare benefits including Housing Benefit.
- Local authorities are expected to: meet and greet the refugee households; arrange translation services and self contained furnished accommodation with basic white goods; provide or commission services with appropriately trained staff to deliver casework plans of integration support that include help with registering with GPs, schools, Job Centres; applying for Biometric Residence Permits; and accessing welfare benefits, banking services and English language courses.

#### **4.0 The Surrey Response**

- 4.1 Following recent discussions at both Surrey Leaders and Surrey Chief Executives preparations have begun in earnest to develop a sustainable approach to resettling refugees, identifying practical support arrangements that will need to be in place.
- 4.2 A multi-agency, pan Surrey group has been established to bring this together. Meeting virtually, it is chaired by Yvonne Rees as the lead for Surrey Chief Executives and includes representatives of district and borough housing, Surrey County Council Safeguarding Children, Schools, Adult Social Care and Surrey Communication Group, Mental Health, Public Health, CCGs and the faith sector.
- 4.3 Each district and borough is considering whether to participate in the VPR scheme. Woking and Reigate and Banstead have confirmed their participation. Multi-agency group will work with Woking and any other participating authorities to ensure a planned and coordinated resettlement process.

#### **5.0 The Mole Valley District Council Response**

- 5.1 It is proposed that, given the extent of the Syrian refugee crisis, Mole Valley District Council (MVDC), in partnership with Surrey County Council, appropriate Clinical Commission Groups (CCGs) and the voluntary and faith sectors makes a positive contribution by committing to participate in the VPR scheme.
- 5.2 This will principally involve arranging accommodation and for the first 12 months working with statutory and voluntary sector partners to deliver the package of required support for refugee households.
- 5.3 Taking into account the housing pressures in the area it is proposed that a maximum of five refugee households are assisted per year over the five years of the VPR scheme, making total of 25 households assisted. The types of households to be assisted per year to be:
- two families with working age parent/parents and have one or two dependent children who are under 18 years old;
  - one single adult female; and
  - two single or couple households who are over 55.
- 5.4 The reasons for the above categories are explained below.
- It is considered that there are insufficient large family sized homes in the area to assist bigger families and the rents in the private rented sector are unlikely to be affordable, as the rents may be more than can be covered by Housing Benefit, particularly for four bedroom homes.
  - To ensure we assist a range of households and demand for different sizes of accommodation is balanced, single people and couples are included in the mix.

- Finally, there is available accommodation for the over 55s within the housing association stock in MVDC.

5.5 Accommodation would be secured in the private rented sector with a rent deposit bond and rent in advance. The refugee households would be able to apply to join the Housing Register subject to meeting the eligibility and qualification criteria required to join. It would be possible to refer the over 55s to housing associations direct for older person designated accommodation where applicants on the Housing Register have not accepted that type of accommodation and there are vacancies.

5.6 A three to four month lead in would be needed to plan and prepare to accept refugee households. This would include ensuring Council staff are appropriately trained and working with the County Council and the CCGs to ensure their and other relevant support services in the voluntary sector are ready, available and coordinated.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

6.1 MVDC's costs and the costs of other statutory partners should be recovered per refugee through the Government's scheme for the first 12 months and beyond if needed. Costs incurred by MVDC are likely to involve securing accommodation, furnishing accommodation, staff time and payments for commissioned specialist services. Statutory partner costs will primarily relate to education services. Health costs are covered separately to the local authorities.

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

7.1 Once signed up to the VPR scheme MVDC will need to abide by the Governments requirements for the scheme.

## **8.0 Options**

### **8.1 Option 1**

Agree the recommendations contained in this report.

### **8.2 Option 2**

Request that further work be undertaken and a further report be submitted to the Executive for agreement.

### **8.3 Option 3**

To reject the recommendation and report to the Home Office that MVDC will not participate in the VPR scheme for Syrian refugees.

## **9.0 Corporate Implications**

### **9.1 Monitoring Officer Commentary**

The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that all relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

### **9.2 S151 Officer commentary**

It is difficult to be precise on the financial implications of this proposal until the Government's intentions on reimbursement of costs are clarified. However, subject to this uncertainty, the s151 Officer confirms all relevant financial risks and implications have been considered in the report.

### **9.3 Risk Implications**

The key risk will be that MVDC's costs are not fully recovered through the Government scheme, however, the indications are that the Government wants to ensure local authorities will participate in the VPR scheme and will provide certainty that costs can be recovered.

It is also possible that homeless families living in either bed and breakfast accommodation or emergency accommodation waiting for a private rented home may not be moved on as quickly, as refugee households are resettled.

### **9.4 Equalities Implications**

The Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

### **9.5 Employment Issues**

There are no employment implications to this report

### **9.6 Sustainability Issues**

There are no sustainability implications to this report.

### **9.7 Consultation**

Consultation has been undertaken with Surrey County Council, Surrey districts and boroughs, CCGs and local housing associations. Engagement with the faith sector and voluntary sectors has commenced.

### **9.9 Communications**

MVDC's website includes a section to signpost residents on how they can support Syrian refugees and this will be kept up to date.

A press release has been prepared with this report.

## **10.0 Background Papers**

- Surrey County Council reports to Surrey Chief Executives on the Syrian Refugee Crisis 11 September and 2 October 2015
- Surrey County Council members update 9 October 2015
- Home Office - Syrian Resettlement Programme fact sheet 1 October 2015 version 3
- Home Office - Letter to local authority chief executives from Richard Harrington MP Minister for Syrian Refugees 2 October 2015
- Home Office - Annexe C – Statement of Requirements
- South East Strategic Partnership for Migration - Email on the Statement of Requirements 13 October 2015



## Syrian Resettlement Programme

### How many additional people will you resettle?

- The Government will expand the existing Syrian Vulnerable Person Scheme and intends to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament.
- The UK is at the forefront of the response to the crisis in Syria and this expansion is part of our comprehensive approach designed as far as possible to help refugees in the region but recognising that for some vulnerable people the only solution is to bring them to countries like the UK.

### How will the arrival of 20,000 be spread out?

- It will take several months to reach full capacity but when we do we would expect to bring in roughly several hundred refugees each month over the course of the Parliament, subject to continuing need and capacity.

### How else is the Government supporting Syrians in need of protection?

- Our priorities are on continuing to provide humanitarian aid to those most in need in the region and actively seeking an end to the crisis. We believe this approach is the best way to ensure that the UK's help has the greatest impact for the majority of refugees who remain in the region and their host countries.
- As the brutal conflict continues in Syria, millions of people continue to be in need. Hundreds of thousands have been killed in the conflict between the Assad regime, extremist groups and moderate opposition groups. In response to the crisis, the UK has allocated over £1.1 billion since 2012 to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable people in Syria and of refugees in the region – more than any other country in the world except the United States. The UK is the only major country in the world that has kept its promise of spending 0.7% of our national income on aid and we should be proud of this. By the end of March 2015, UK support had delivered over 18 million food rations, each of which feeds one person for one month, provided access to clean water for 1.6 million people (peak month), and over 2.4 million medical consultations in Syria and the region.

### How will the expansion of the programme operate?

- We already have significant experience of resettling vulnerable people and our existing domestic resettlement mechanisms provide a basis for a relatively quick increase in numbers. And we are already working with existing partners to ensure that we can begin to increase numbers as quickly as possible. Over the coming weeks and months, we will work with local authorities, the UNHCR and others to put in place the full structures to ensure we can scale up the current arrangements so that we can meet the aim of bringing up to 20,000 Syrians over the lifetime of this Parliament and deliver on the expansion that has been announced.

### How long will the expansion take?

- Although we have simplified the process as much as we can the UNHCR must still assess each individual case before referring them to the Home Office. The Home Office must conduct visa checks and at the same time a place must be found in a local authority. We do all this already but it is important we get it right and scaling up a system like this in a way that protects the interests of all concerned, including local communities, will take a little bit of time.

### How do you choose who comes to the UK?

- The Syrian VPR is based on need. It prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others. We work closely with the UNHCR to identify cases that they deem in need of resettlement and we will continue this work to ensure we deliver our commitment to provide refuge to 20,000 Syrians.
- The UNHCR identifies people in need of resettlement based on the following criteria: women and girls at risk; survivors of violence and/or torture; refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; children and adolescents at risk; persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement countries.

### How does the process work?

- UNHCR refer cases to the Home Office. We check they meet our eligibility criteria and carry out medical and security checks. We arrange exit visas from the host country and entry visas into the UK. At the same time, we pass the cases to a local authority who has asked to participate in the scheme. The Local Authority is asked to accept or reject cases. The referral forms give detail on family make up, age and specific needs. Further detail on any medical needs will follow shortly after via a full medical health assessment report. On accepting a case, local authorities then need to arrange housing, school places etc. In parallel we would agree an arrival date. We are working to make this process as quick as possible.

### What if an area is new to resettlement?

- Local authorities will need to think carefully about whether they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care and integration of these refugees. It would be worth speaking to existing resettlement areas to learn best practice. Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships can put you in touch.

### How can local authorities find out more about the profiles and needs of the refugees they will be hosting?

- All cases will differ and it is very difficult to generalise. We do not have detail of the cases before UNHCR refer them to us. As soon as a local authority wants to participate, we will send these referrals that give detailed information on the individual cases. If authorities want a particular make up of cases, they should state this and we will do our best to match cases.

### Will the 20,000 be on top of existing schemes?

- The Government will expand the existing Syrian VPR Scheme and we expect to resettle up to 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament. This is in addition to those we resettle under Gateway and Mandate and the thousands who receive protection in the UK under normal asylum procedures.

### **How will these people be accommodated? Where will they go when they are here?**

- The UK has been operating resettlement schemes for many years and we already have established and effective networks to accommodate and support resettled people. However, we recognise that the increase in numbers will require an expansion of current networks and the impact on local communities and infrastructure will need to be managed carefully. That is why we are working with a wide range of partners including local authorities and civil society organisations to ensure that people are integrated sensitively into local communities.
- Our existing dispersal policy is aimed at ensuring an equitable distribution of refugees across the country so that no individual local authority bears a disproportionate share of the burden. We are working closely with local authorities to ensure that this remains the case.

### **How will you ensure refugees are dispersed fairly and in a way that manages the impacts on local communities and services?**

- We are determined to ensure that no local authority is asked to take more than the local structures are able to cope with. That is why we will be talking to local authorities and other partners over the coming weeks to ensure that capacity can be identified and the impact on those taking new cases can be managed in a fair and controlled way.

### **How will schools be supported to provide language support for refugee children?**

- Financial support for English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils is a matter for local discretion. The funding arrangements enable local authorities to allocate a proportion of their funding to schools on the basis of the number of pupils in each school who have EAL and who have been in the school system for a maximum of three years. The pupil rate for this is also decided locally and can therefore reflect specific challenges in the area. Schools can also use the additional money they receive through the pupil premium to raise the attainment of disadvantaged EAL pupils.
- Local authorities have the freedom to take account of high migration in their local funding formula, to address the additional costs of having a large number (over 10%) of pupils arriving at unusual times in the school year.
- Schools can access information about good practice in meeting the needs of EAL pupils - Ofsted has published some case studies showing good practice at schools with high proportions of pupils with EAL. Resources are also available from the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum, an organisation that seeks to promote effective teaching and learning for EAL pupils in UK schools.

### **How will you ensure that there are enough schools places in areas where refugees are resettled?**

- We have committed to investing £7bn on new school places over the next six years, and in the last Parliament funding for school places doubled to £5bn to create 445,000 additional places. Local Authority's are allocated funding for school places based on their own local data on school capacity and pupil forecasts, in which they take account of factors including rising birth rates, housing development, trends in internal migration and migration to England from elsewhere in the United Kingdom and from overseas. We continue to work with LAs to make sure that every child has a school place.

### **How can I become a foster carer for a refugee child?**

- We are not expecting the refugees arriving in the first months of the scheme to include unaccompanied children, but if you are interested in finding out more about fostering, you might wish to contact your local authority. They can provide you with details about applying to foster for them. You can also find out more about fostering by contacting Fosterline, a government funded service providing independent advice and support for people considering becoming foster carers. In addition, you might wish to look at information about applying to foster that Fostering Network give on their website at: <http://www.couldyoufoster.org.uk/>.
- Further information for foster carers is also available on GOV.UK : <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers>. This page sets out the process people should follow and explains how much financial support and training foster carers can get.

### **I am interested in adopting an unaccompanied refugee child?**

- We are not expecting the refugees arriving in the first months of the scheme to include unaccompanied children. Even if we do support unaccompanied children in the future it is unlikely that adoption will be an appropriate option for these children. The United Nations and other humanitarian charities advise that no new adoption applications should be considered in the period after a disaster or from a war zone before the authorities in that State are in a position to apply the necessary safeguards. This is especially true when civil authority breaks down or temporarily ceases to function.
- It is not uncommon in an emergency or unsettled situation for children to be temporarily separated from their parents or other family members who may be looking for them. Moreover, parents may send their children out of the area for their safety. Premature and unregulated attempts to organise the adoption of such a child abroad should be avoided and resisted with efforts to reunite children with relatives or extended family being given priority. So whilst some lone refugee children may come to the UK for temporary care, we would wish to support them to be reunited with their parents or other relatives where this is possible.

### **How can people help now?**

- People can already make donations to charities and volunteer to help local refugee support groups. We would encourage that to continue but we will also be consulting partners on options to do more - including ways to sponsor refugees alongside those supported by the government.
- People can also refer to the Government release on the GOV.UK website <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2>

The British Red Cross has created a Crisis Helpline on 0800 107 8727 to triage calls to appropriate organisations.

## Key facts and statistics on resettlement

- The UK operates three resettlement routes, Gateway, Mandate and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) Scheme, working closely with the UNHCR on each. The Gateway programme has run for 10 years and has resettled almost 6,400 people in that time, and aims to resettle around 750 people a year.
- On the VPR, we are working closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to identify some of the most vulnerable displaced Syrians and bring them to the UK.
- The scheme is helping those in the greatest need who cannot be supported effectively in the region by giving them protection and support in the UK – the scheme prioritises people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of torture and violence, and women and children at risk. The current criteria for acceptance under the scheme will be expanded to ensure more of those in the greatest need are resettled in the UK.
- Since the first arrivals in March 2014 to the end of June 2015 (the last published figures), 216 people were relocated to the UK under the Syrian VPR scheme.
- Since the crisis began in 2011 we have granted asylum or other forms of leave to almost 5,000 Syrian nationals and dependants through normal asylum procedures.
- In response to the increase in asylum claims, the UK introduced a concession in October 2012 for Syrian nationals who are already legally present in the UK, allowing them to extend their leave or change immigration category without leaving the UK. This currently runs to 28 February 2016.

## How does the current Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme work?

The UK sets the criteria and then UNHCR identifies and submits potential cases for our consideration. Cases are screened and considered on the papers and we retain the right to reject on security, war crimes or other grounds. Once the screening process has been completed a full medical assessment is conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the host country. Full details of the case and medical history are sent to the local authority for assessment of need, including whether suitable accommodation and care are available locally. The local authority then provides details of the estimated costs.

Eligibility is then confirmed and IOM start the visa application process. UK Visas and Immigration International issue UK visas (3 months Leave Outside of the Rules) and on arrival, arrangements are made for Biometric Residence Permits to be issued with 5 years' humanitarian protection.

## Worldwide trends

### How many refugees are there worldwide?

- The UNHCR reports that by the end of 2014, the number of forcibly displaced individuals worldwide stood at 59.5 million. There are 19.5 million refugees worldwide. 51% of refugees were under 18 years old.

### Where do most refugees come from?

- Syria is the world's largest source country of both internally displaced people (7.6 million) and refugees (3.88 million at the end of 2014). Afghanistan (2.59 million) and Somalia (1.1 million) are the next biggest refugee source countries. This is followed by Sudan (648,900) and South Sudan (616,200).

### What are the reasons for refugee flows?

- The humanitarian situation in **Syria** continues to deteriorate. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance now stands at 12.2 million, and four in every five Syrians live in poverty. Flagrant human rights violations, indiscriminate attacks against densely populated areas and targeting of civilian infrastructure, in particular aerial bombardment by the Assad regime, continues in violation of international norms.
- **Afghanistan** remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with 1 in 3 people living below the poverty line and without access to basic services or opportunities to support their families. The ongoing insurgency across many parts of the country means people are facing violence as part of their daily lives and has given rise to a sharp increase in population displacement. As of December 2014, UNHCR listed over 2.5m Afghans as refugees and over 800,000 Afghans are internally displaced.
- **Somalis** are the third largest group, following Eritreans and Sudanese, arriving in Europe from the East African region. They make up 9% of migrants to Europe. The main causes of migration from Somalia are understood to be spikes in insecurity and humanitarian need (driven by conflict and Al-Shabaab activity). There are also likely to be a significant number of 'economic migrants' looking for better economic opportunity than exists in Somalia. Large diaspora communities in the UK (thought to be 3-500,000) and elsewhere in Europe create a pull factor.
- We believe that **Sudan** is primarily a country of transit, though there are refugees fleeing conflict in Darfur. Numbers of economic migrants from Sudan are unknown - if someone claims to be from Darfur it is difficult to prove otherwise. The security services have periodic clamp-downs on Eritreans in Sudan (usually in Khartoum) with some forcible returns for not having the correct paperwork.

## General Asylum Statistics

- There were 25,771 asylum applications (main applicants) in the UK in the year ending June 2015. (Including dependants, there were 32,508).
- In recent quarters, we have seen fewer applications from some countries with traditionally higher refusal rates (Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria), and more from countries with higher grant rates (Eritrea, Syria, Sudan).
- In the year ending June 2015, the highest numbers of applications came from Eritrean (3,568), Pakistani (2,302) and Syrian (2,204) nationals (main applicants only). Including dependants, the largest number of asylum applications came from Eritrea (3,624), Pakistan (3,276) and Iran (2,533).
- Compared to the year ending June 2014, the number of initial decisions on asylum applications (main applicants) increased by 107% in the year ending June 2015, to 28,538 from 13,795. (Including dependants, initial decisions increased by 117%, to 38,373 from 17,697).
- The total number of outstanding initial decisions has fallen in recent quarters (main applicants only – Q3 2014: 18,149, Q4 2014: 17,067; Q1 2015: 12,878, Q2 2015: 12,368; main applicants and dependants – Q3 2014: 24,369, Q4 2014: 22,898; Q1 2015: 16,879, Q2 2015: 16,163).
- We are certifying more cases, thus refusing clearly unfounded cases a right of appeal in the UK. In the year ending June 2015, 14% of all refusals for main applicants were certified, unchanged from the year ending June 2014. (Including dependants, 15% of refusals were certified, compared with 14% in the previous year).

## Support

- We currently support a total of over 36,000 asylum seekers (main applicants and dependants; sections 95, 98 & 4). At the end of June 2015, 30,457 asylum seekers and their dependants were being supported under Section 95.
- There are over 26,000 asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation, in over 200 local authorities. Our dispersal policy ensures a reasonable spread amongst those local authorities.

## UASCs

- There were 2,168 asylum applications from Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASCs) in the year ending June 2015, an increase of 46% from the year ending June 2014 (1,488). These applications represented 8% of all main applications for asylum.
- Despite the recent increase in UASC applications, they remain below the peak of 3,976 in 2008.

## Resettlement

- In the year ending June 2015, 166 Syrians were relocated to the UK under the VPR scheme (216 since the scheme began in March 2014). This is in addition to almost 5,000 Syrians (including dependants) who have been granted protection under our normal asylum rules since the crisis began in April 2011.

- In the year ending June 2015, we resettled 640 refugees under the Gateway Resettlement Programme. Since 2004, we have resettled 6,380 refugees under the programme and we met our target in the last financial year (April 2014 to March 2015), resettling over 750 refugees.

### Removals

- In the last two years (July 2013 to June 2015) there were over 8,500 enforced removals of people who had sought asylum at some stage (including dependants). In the same period there were over 5,500 voluntary departures of people who had sought asylum at some stage.

### International comparisons

- The number of asylum applications to the EU in the year ending June 2015 was the highest it has been since 2002.
- There were an estimated 754,700 asylum applications by main applicants and dependants to the 28 EU countries in the year ending June 2015 (an increase of 65% on the previous year). Of these, the UK received 32,600 (4% of EU asylum intake) compared to 259,300 in Germany, 92,600 in Hungary and 78,400 in Sweden. In 2010, the EU received 241,100 applications for main applicants and dependants, and of this the UK received 22,600 (9% of EU asylum intake).
- The UK had the seventh highest number of asylum applications within the EU in the year ending June 2015 (fifth in year ending June 2014). In the year ending June 2015, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, Italy, France and Austria received more asylum applications than the UK.
- Asylum claims in Germany were eight times those in the UK (259,300 vs 32,600) in the year ending June 2015. Hungary had the second highest number of applications in the year ending June 2015 after being ranked ninth during the previous 12 months.
- When the relative size of resident populations of the 28 EU countries is taken into account, the UK ranked 16th in terms of asylum seekers per head of the population in the year ending June 2015 (it was also 16th in the previous year).

# Equality Impact Assessment

Syrian Refugee – Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme 2015

Appendix 2



<b>Name of assessor</b>	<b>Alison Wilks</b>
<b>Strategic Management Lead</b>	<b>Rachel O'Reilly</b>
<b>Date of assessment</b>	<b>13 October 2015</b>
<b>Is this a new or existing function or policy?</b>	<b>New</b>

*Please note that guidance (revised in March 2014) for completing this template is available on the intranet. This template was also revised in March 2014.*

## **Section 1: Introduction and background** (see p.10 of the guidance)

**Please describe your service or function. This should include:**

- **The aims and scope**
- **The main beneficiaries or users**
- **The main equality, accessibility, social exclusion issues and barriers, and the 'protected characteristics'<sup>1</sup> they relate to (not all assessments will encounter issues relating to every protected characteristic)**

**If this EIA is part of a project it is important to focus on the service or policy the project aims to review or improve.**

The Vulnerable Person Relocation (VPR) scheme aims to provide a structured and phased programme of resettlement for the most vulnerable refugees living in camps on the borders of Syria.

Selection is based on the following criteria: 'women and girls at risk; survivors of violence and/or torture; refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; children and adolescents at risk; persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement countries'.

It is proposed that the Council participates in the scheme to resettle five refugee households per year for five years. The types of households to be assisted per year to be:

- two families with working age parent/parents *who are capable of work* and have one or two dependent children who are under 18 years old;
- one single adult female who has been subject to violence; and
- two single or couple households who are over 55.

The Council would need to meet the Home Office requirements of the Vulnerable Person Relocation scheme. This would involve meeting and greeting the refugee households; arranging translation services and self contained furnished accommodation with basic white goods; providing or commissioning services with appropriately trained staff to deliver casework plans of integration support that

<sup>1</sup> More information and definition of protected characteristics can be found [here](#)

include help with registering with GPs, schools, Job Centres; applying for Biometric Residence Permits; and accessing welfare benefits, banking services and English language courses. The work would be undertaken with the Surrey County Council and the voluntary and faith sectors.

**Now describe how this fits into the Council's Corporate Priorities, Sustainable Community Strategy or other local, regional or national plans and priorities.**

**PROSPERITY**

- **A vibrant local economy with thriving towns and villages**
  - The resettlement of refugee households in MVDC will add to the diversity of the area and the households will have the opportunity in the long term to contribute to the local economy through employment and voluntary work.

**COMMUNITY WELLBEING**

**Active communities and support for those who need it**

- **Improve opportunities for residents to live active lives.**
- **Promote community spirit, encourage individuals, families and communities to be support each other and help our neighbourhoods to be more resilient in times of need.**
  - Refugee households will need help and support to integrate within the local community and to improve their overall wellbeing. This presents opportunities across the local community to welcome and support refugee households and work closely together to promote community spirit.

**If you are not carrying out an equality impact assessment, briefly summarise reasons why you have reached this conclusion, the evidence for this and the nature of any stakeholder verification of your conclusion.**

n/a

**Section 2: Analysis and assessment** (see pp. 10-13 of the guidance)

Given available information, what is the actual or likely impact on minority, disadvantaged, vulnerable and socially excluded groups?

Indicate for each 'protected characteristics' whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, a mixture of both or no impact.

Protected characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Age	✓			MVDC's proposed preference for the size and characteristics of refugee households to be assisted per year over the five years of the VPR scheme includes families with one or two children under 18-years old; it also includes single or couple households who are over 55 years old
Disability	✓	✓		<b>Positive</b> -The VPR scheme aims to protect refugees with medical needs or disabilities <b>Negative</b> – It is possible that some homeless families (potentially including people with disabilities) living in either bed and breakfast accommodation or emergency accommodation waiting for a private rented home may not be moved on as quickly, as refugee households are resettled.
Gender reassignment	✓			The VPR scheme aims to protect refugees at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	
Pregnancy and maternity		✓		It is possible that some homeless families (including pregnant women and mothers of babies) living in either bed and breakfast accommodation or emergency accommodation waiting for a private rented home may not be moved on as quickly, as refugee households are resettled.

Race	✓			The VPR scheme is specifically for refugees from Syria
Religion or belief			✓	
Sex	✓			The VPR scheme aims to protect refugee women who are at risk and survivors of violence. MVDC's proposed preference for the size and characteristics of refugee households to be assisted per year over the five years of the VPR scheme includes one single adult female who has been subject to violence
Sexual orientation	✓			The VPR scheme aims to protect refugees at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity
<b>Other aspects to consider</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>No impact</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Carers			✓	
Rural/urban issues			✓	
HR issues (how will staff with protected characteristics be affected?)			✓	

**What can be done to reduce the effects of any negative impacts? Where negative impact cannot be completely diminished, can this be justified, and is it lawful?**

The rehousing of some homeless families that the Council has a responsibility to and is looking to house in the private rented sector may be delayed as refugee families are accommodated and resettled. However, there will only be two refugee family households to be housed per year, (the other refugee households to be resettled are single people or couples) so the impact should be minimal.

**Where there are positive impacts, what changes have been or will be made? Who are the beneficiaries? How have they benefited?**

The Council would through the support plan for each refugee commission specialist services to meet their specific identified needs.

**Section 3: Evidence gathering and fact-finding** (see p.14 of the guidance)

**What evidence is available to support your views above? Please include:**

- A summary of the available evidence
- Identification of where there are gaps in the evidence (this may identify a need for more evidence in the action plan)
- What information is currently captured with respect to usage and take up of services.
- What the current situation is in relation to equality and diversity monitoring (where relevant)

Should the Council decide to participate in the scheme the accommodation and support services would need a three to four month planning and preparation stage to ensure the appropriate services are ready and coordinated and staff have received training.

**How have stakeholders been involved in this assessment? Who are they, and what is their view?**

Stakeholders have not been involved with this assessment. However, planning and preparation work would be undertaken with Surrey County Council, health and the voluntary and faith sectors.

**Recommendations**

**Please summarise the main recommendations arising from the assessment. NB If it is impossible to diminish negative impacts to an acceptable or even lawful level the recommendation should be that the proposal or the relevant part of it should not proceed.**

The Council would through the support plan for each refugee and commission specialist services to meet their specific identified needs.

**Section 4: Action Plan** (see pp.15-16 of the guidance)

Actions needed to implement the EIA recommendations

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Expected outcome</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Deadline for action</b>
<b>Support for specific identified needs</b>	<b>Commission appropriate services</b>	<b>The refugee will benefit from the support service and this will aid their integration with the local community and improve their overall wellbeing</b>	<b>Strategic Housing Manager</b>	<b>April 2016</b>

**Sign off**

<b>Who will be responsible for reviewing this EIA?</b>	Alison Wilks
<b>Review date(s) i.e. when will this EIA be reviewed – see p.9 of guidance</b>	April 2016
<b>Strategic Management Lead signed off</b>	Rachel O'Reilly

- Signed off electronic version to be kept in your team for review
- Electronic copy to be forwarded to the Policy and Performance Team for publishing