

DECISION RECORDING FORM

DECISION: Afghan Locally Employed Staff (ALES) Relocation Scheme

The approval of:

1. The Council to work in partnership with the regional Strategic Migration Partnership (South West Councils) and Devon County Council to support the Governments ALES Relocation Scheme under the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
2. That the Council commit to working with up to 3 families locally relocated under the ALES scheme within the support provisions provided by the Afghan LES Housing Costs Scheme

REASON FOR DECISION:

Following NATO's decision to withdraw military forces from Afghanistan, the Government have been working to relocate Afghan citizens including their families in the UK via the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP.) These are Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) who have worked for the UK to support our forces.

The ALES Housing Costs Fund nationally is put in place to support Local Authorities with offers of housing accommodation support, either directly provided or through a private sector landlord. This is an urgent situation and the Council currently has no specific approved policy or decision in place for engagement with the ALES scheme. The Council do have an existing commitment to refugees under the United Kingdom Refugee Scheme (UKRS). This decision was made by Cabinet on 29 October 2020. It was agreed that:

- (a) The proposal made by a community sponsorship group with regard to the resettlement of an additional refugee household in the district under the existing Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme be approved.
- (b) The Council should take part in the new United Kingdom Refugee Scheme (UKRS).
- (c) A maximum of 5 additional families are supported through either the existing or the new scheme. Should the existing Syrian scheme reopen and be available locally then under existing commitments 2 of these additional 5 families should be supported through that scheme, leaving a balance of 3 families to be supported under the new UK scheme.

This decision seeks to utilise this commitment whilst expanding the scope to include the ALES with additional provision of 3 families under this scheme. The UKRS and Syrian resettlement schemes specifically are currently on hold nationally and are therefore not presently operating.

DECISION BY:

Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services (Councillor Bob Evans)

CONSULTEES

WARD(S)	This is a strategic decision impacting the whole District and not one specific ward. However, suitable accommodation is most likely to be found in areas with the greatest local infrastructure with access to public transport into major centres for wider employment and cultural support. Consequently, accommodation is most likely to be located within a ward of one of the main towns in the District.
----------------	--

HAS/HAVE WARD MEMBER(S) BEEN CONSULTED	NO
None	

COMMENTS OF OTHER CONSULTEES
None

DATE OF DECISION	9 September 2021
-------------------------	------------------

EXEMPT INFORMATION	No

FINANCIAL, LEGAL & EQUALITY ISSUES, IF ANY:
<p>The ALES scheme is sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) under the following terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If a local authority comes forward with an offer of support, for example for a 3-bed house for a couple with 4 children, their ARAP funding package will include funding for the rental at £15 per person, per night for up to 4 months, or until benefits are in place.

- Therefore, to house this family of 6 people, the LA have a nominal 'budget' of £630 per week / £2,730 per month to secure rental accommodation.
- The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) will support efforts to assist the family into employment, but if the family have not found employment and are affected by their benefit cap of £1666.67 (as a family living outside of greater London) per month, the new fund will enable LAs with ALES to be awarded a 'top up' grant to cover the rent shortfall

Mid Devon Council will formally work the regional Strategic Migration Partnership (SW Councils) and Devon County Council to administer the scheme if any local offers of accommodation support can be made.

A full comparison of the ALES and UKRS schemes is attached for reference.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Failure to have approval in place for the ALES scheme means the Council cannot engage and provide offers of accommodation support. In turn, this means the Council cannot actively work with the private sectors landlords which have already come forward with potential offers of accommodation and/or consider potential utilisation of the Council's own housing stock (within the Housing Revenue Account). Ultimately therefore, this would be failure to support what is an urgent, vitally important national mission which has local community backing. It is morally imperative that we help these people settle into new lives here in the UK.

The Council have previously approved to engage in other refugee support schemes such as the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme under UKRS and the financial security offered under the ARAP provisions for the ALES scheme is as set out above.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION / DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT:*

None

SIGNED Councillor R B Evans

DATE 9 September 2021

ALES and UKRS Scheme comparison September 2021

	Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) – relocation schemes	Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes
Scheme Type/Focus	Relocation	Resettlement
Primary Nationality	Afghan nationals	Syrian nationals
PRA Language	English / Pashto / Dari	Arabic / Kurdish
Support Period	12-month integration support package that includes helping arrivals to access education places for children, health services and access to mainstream benefits.	Five years. Assigned caseworker to every resettled family or individual who maintains close contact with the family for the first 12 months to support their well-being and integration. Years 2 – 5, LA's determine the best use of funding claimed to support refugees in their journey towards integration and self-sufficiency.
Funding	Integration package £10,500 per person (one-off)	Year 1: £8,500 per person (pp) Year 2: £5,000 pp Year 3: £3,700 pp Year 4: £2,300 pp Year 5: £1,000 pp
Immigration Status	LES who meet the eligibility criteria will be offered a relocation package, which provides the opportunity to apply for limited leave to enter the UK under Part 7 of the Immigration Rules. Successful applicants will receive a UK visa which grants 5 years limited leave to enter the UK, and an opportunity to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain at the end of that 5-year period.	Individuals resettled through the VPRS and VCRS since July 2017 have been granted five years' refugee leave on arrival. Those resettled before July 2017 were granted five years' Humanitarian Protection (HP). Opportunity to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain at the end of that 5-year period.

	Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) – relocation schemes	Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes
Eligible to claim benefit	LES are not eligible for benefits until they can satisfy the Habitual Residency Test set by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) which can take up to 3 months, so the funding package provides cash support those who arrive under the relocation schemes for up to 4 months.	Resettled individuals have an immediate right to work and access to mainstream welfare benefits, dependant on their circumstances and whether they meet the relevant Department for Work and Pensions criteria for the specific benefit for which they are applying.
Eligible to work	Yes, once issued with a biometric residence permit number (days after arrival)	
Rent	£15 per person, per day (up to 4 months)	UC/Housing Benefit
Cash Support	Weekly cash support rates (up to four months): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single (under 25) - £59.20 • Single (25 or over) - £74.70 • Couples - £117.40 • Children (under 18) - £37.75 	Initial cash allowance for each Refugee of £200/£300 (this is to ensure they have sufficient funds to live on while their claim for benefits is being processed)
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) funding	£850 per adult	£850 per adult
Education funding	None (DCC advocates using integration funding to provide equity with VPRS/VCRS)	Children (5-18) £4,500 / Children (3-4) £2,250 (lump sum)
Eligible for exceptional costs from Home Office (e.g. complex cases)	Yes	Yes
Considered suitable for Community Sponsorship	No	Yes