





Bute this would be Arabic speaking, smaller families and non-complex medical conditions.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Notes the Council's continued involvement in the resettlement of refugees, on the island of Bute, through the Home Office UK Resettlement Scheme; and
- b) Notes the continued good work of the Refugee Resettlement Group and the local community in resettling refugees on the island of Bute.

### **4.0 DETAIL**

4.1 The decision to participate in refugee resettlement was an executive decision by the then Chief Executive Sally Loudon which was homologated at the Council meeting on 24 September 2015. Update reports on the resettlement programme have been provided to elected members at Council each autumn since 2016.

4.2 Since the resettlement programme began in 2015 we have resettled 34 refugee families on the Isle of Bute. Not all families chose to remain on the island and we are currently supporting 12 families. From the beginning of 2016 and the resettlement of our phase 2 families we have resettled 3 or 4 families each year.

4.3 The SVPR programme is fully funded by the Home Office. There is a tariff we receive for families for 5 years of support which tapers from year 1 to 5. We are also very successful at applying for additional funding and since 2019 we have brought in an additional £30k to the programme from various grants. Families are free to move in the UK, our families often move to the mainland for work.

4.4 The refugee families resettled in Bute are all from Syria, are Arabic speaking and have lost their homes, their jobs, their places of work. Many have been imprisoned and tortured and all have lost relatives and friends and do not know if family members (brothers, cousins, uncles, nephews) are alive or dead as they are still living in a war zone. The families are separated from extended family and for many there is little likelihood they will ever see them in person again. Families who have met the criteria for resettlement in the UK are matched to their resettlement area. We can decline a family if we and our partner agencies Health and Education feel their needs would not be best met in Bute.

4.5 There is housing available in Rothesay and we work with the Registered Social Landlords, ACHA and Fyne Homes, to identify and make ready appropriate accommodation. We decorate and furnish each property, funded by SVPR budget. We also accept donations so that each child arrives to a bedroom filled with appropriate warm clothing and toys.

- 4.6 All of the Syrian children attend Rothesay Joint Campus (3-18 school). We have children in ELC, primary and secondary. The children enjoy school and are flourishing. They did struggle with home schooling but despite this the children are all learning English very quickly. We have additional support in school to help the children including ASN assistants and an EAL teacher (English as an additional language). The EAL support in place benefits all of the children at the school where English isn't their first language.
- 4.7 The council's Community Learning team provide English lessons for the adults, ESOL tutors and a coordinator are paid for from the SVPR budget. The Home Offices requires us to deliver minimum of 8 hours accredited (SQA) ESOL each week. Pre-lockdown we made learning English fun by organising activities and trips. We have substituted this with guest speakers giving talks on a wide variety of topics relating to life in Scotland. We make sure we make learning relevant by tailoring English lessons to the family's needs and the job market. We had arranged for childcare at a local playgroup whilst our women attend classes and in the past we also ran practical courses in partnership with Argyll College. In March 2020 due to lockdown our learning moved on line and is still delivered using a virtual platform which has been challenging as many of the refugees have poor IT skills.
- 4.8 The refugees are entitled to receive benefits and work in the UK. Our employability programme helps them to volunteer and gain work experience in the community hopefully leading to long term sustainable employment. We have had a number of adults move into work and pre the pandemic around 80% of our adults were engaged in employment activities or in work. We also help refugees to apply to study at colleges and universities. We teach IT skills, literacy and numeracy and we support them to gain certificates which might help lead to employment such as Food Hygiene. Business Gateway provide support for business start-ups and the barbers shop and patisserie have both expanded and opened premises on the

new families since January 2020, when 3 families arrived. We have sufficient budget to deliver services and meet commitments until 2024 but will need to resettle families under the new scheme if the programme is to continue without either tapering down to a close or drawing on council funding.

- 5.2 The UKRS scheme has now started, worldwide resettlement had been on hold due to Covid travel restrictions. UKRS cases are now arriving in the UK and COSLA in their role as Strategic Migration Partner and the Home Office are asking local authorities to confirm their commitment. We have indicated to COSLA that we would resettle up to 3 families per year under this new scheme. There is capacity in the support arrangements and the services have the ability to support more families than the current 12.
- 5.3 The resettlement programme on Bute has been very successful the council's Best Value 3 report, Joint Inspection of Childrens Services, INEA all recognised the programme as an example of good practice. In addition the Bute community won the inaugural Pride of Scotland Award in 2020 in recognition of their support and the programme won a COSLA Excellence Award 2019 for Supporting Refugees into Work. Scottish Universities in partnership with their European counterparts (GLIMMER project) highlighted our employability programme as best practice. A delegation from Finland travelled to Rothesay Joint Campus and wrote a paper on the outstanding approach to integration within schools which should be copied. Australian film makers came to Bute to film with us to show their audience how resettlement could be done really well across the world, we were the only UK project featured. Italian NGOs have adopted our Employability strategy and delivery approach. We created our own evaluation tool methodology and earlier this year the Northern Ireland government contacted us as they wanted to replicate our approach across NI and were looking to take some of our good practice and build it into their programme.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – No implications
- 6.2 Financial – Resettlement funding is received from the Home Office and the SVPR budget is fully committed with a contingency in place to deal with unexpected costs. The UKRS programme offers the same funding levels.
- 6.3 Legal – No implications

No implications

6.5.3 Islands

No implications

6.6 Risk – No implications

6.7 Customer Service – Translating material into Arabic has been an important consideration to ensure refugees can access information and use local services.

**Douglas Hendry, Executive Director for Refugee Resettlement**

**Cllr Robin Currie, Council Leader**

For further information contact:

Morag Brown

Business Improvement Manager

Tel 01546 604199

Email [morag.brown@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:morag.brown@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

1<sup>st</sup> June 2021