

**WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE – 29 NOVEMBER 2016**

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**Title:**

**WAVERLEY'S FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE  
GOVERNMENT'S VULNERABLE PERSONS RELOCATION SCHEME**

**[Portfolio Holders: Cllrs Julia Potts  
and Carole King]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

This report updates Members on the Government's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme and recommends that the Council participates in the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme for five years with a commitment to assist up to 5 households over this period.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

The key priorities in the Corporate Plan of Customer Service, Community Wellbeing and Value for Money will help shape the Council's overall approach to supporting vulnerable families in the borough and participating in the Government's Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme. Under these priorities the Council also has a strong track record of supporting families with complex needs through its highly regarded Family Support Service.

**Resource/Value for Money implications:**

The full details of the funding available to participating local authorities is set out in a 'Home Office Funding Instruction' document and for Year One costs these are set at £8,520 per individual, with additional specified amounts for education costs to be paid to educational establishments.

Local Authorities can also apply for top up payments where there may be additional needs or extenuating circumstances. Payment is made to the local authority on the basis of 40% of the yearly cost within 30 days of the household's arrival into the UK and the remainder paid in arrears in two equal instalments at the end of the fourth and eighth month.

Further funding for year 2 to year 5 has also been confirmed by the Government although at a lower level to reflect the lower expected support needs over time. The Government's funding is expected to meet all the costs associated with supporting these households.

The costs of the two Family Support Officer posts recommended in this report can be fully met from a combination of the Government's funding for Troubled Families and the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. Given the risk

associated with posts funded from any external funding stream, the Council's usual policy will apply in making provision within the funding for any future redundancy costs.

### **Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

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### **Introduction**

1. The Government has introduced the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in response to the continued conflict in Syria. The Government has pledged to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees over 5 years from refugee camps bordering Syria under this scheme and has invited Councils to participate.
2. The Scheme aims to provide assistance and resettlement for the most vulnerable refugee households living in camps bordering Syria. Under the scheme, the Home Office (via the United Nations High Commission for Refugees or UNHCR) will identify vulnerable households in the camps, handle their refugee applications and carry out the essential screening/vetting checks prior to them travelling to the UK.
3. To date relatively few Syrian Refugee families have been resettled in the UK and significant further progress will need to be made across the country if the Government's pledge is to be met. In Surrey, the majority of boroughs and districts have now indicated their intention to take part in the scheme and a small proportion of these have started to receive families.

### **Detailed arrangements**

4. A key aspect of the scheme is the requirement on the Council to provide a home for the household for at least the first 12 months and ideally for a period of 2 years from their date of arrival. This must be a self-contained furnished home. It can be a privately rented home but importantly it cannot constitute 'lodging with a host family'. Those Councils in Surrey who have agreed to participate in the Scheme are primarily looking to secure private rented accommodation rather than accessing social housing.
5. In addition to providing a home, the Council would also need to provide support and assistance to a household to enable them to adapt to a new country and integrate into the local community. This would involve specialist casework support and assistance with access to education, health care and language skills for example, for at least their first 12 months. The Council's Family Support Service is best placed to provide this intensive and tailored support and ensure that relevant specialist agencies and local community organisations are actively involved.
6. Households are given refugee status for 5 years and this carries eligibility to work and claim welfare benefits including Housing Benefit where necessary. Should the conflict in Syria ease then it is possible their permission to remain in the UK could change but in any event, it would be expected that, over time,

households would become less dependent and more self sufficient, particularly in terms of securing employment and be in a position to secure their own accommodation longer term.

7. Across Surrey a co-ordinating group has been established to help plan and facilitate support provided by the County and to share learning developed at a Borough and District level. Waverley is already represented on this group.
8. Funding is available from the Home Office to cover a range of expenses equivalent to approximately £8,600 per household member for the first year (ie up to £32,000 for a family of four) with some follow-on funding for a further four year period beyond this ranging from £5,000 per person in year two to £1,000 per person in Year 5. This can only be used to reimburse specific costs associated with housing, support and social care. Any health related costs are dealt with separately. In addition, households are able to access Housing Benefit so their rent (up to the LHA rate) can be met through Housing Benefit. In this way, there should be sufficient funding available to support Syrian refugee households without diverting resources from other services.
9. Should the Council join the scheme, it is expected that it would be allocated its first refugee household a few weeks ahead of their arrival into the UK. It is proposed that households would be accommodated within private sector tenancies or tenancies of property owned by community or charitable organisations, which would not normally have been used for meeting the needs of those already on the Council's housing register.
10. It is proposed that the Council offers to assist up to 5 households over the 5 year period of the scheme, although this may vary depending on the availability of suitable accommodation. This is the same number that most other Boroughs and Districts in Surrey have indicated they will be accommodating, although some will be taking on more.

### **Waverley's Family Support Service**

11. Waverley's Family Support Service was established in 2013 as the first of its kind in Surrey. Since then all the Surrey Boroughs and Districts have either established their own Family Support Teams or made use of these services in neighbouring boroughs. Waverley's Family Support Service is the highest performing in Surrey but is also the smallest. The service works with the most vulnerable families in Waverley who have complex needs, providing practical tailored support to tackle the underlying reasons that have led them into crisis, and works intensively with family members to enable them to get back on their feet. The Service also has a key role in co-ordinating the input of other relevant agencies around the family including Social Care, Youth, Health, Education, the Department of Work and Pensions, and services provided through the voluntary sector.
12. Waverley's Family Support Team is uniquely placed within the Council to take on a lead role in the support to Syrian Refugees with much of the knowledge and expertise already in place, including contacts in relevant agencies. In the other Boroughs and Districts in Surrey, local Family Support Teams are also

being seen as the natural lead for coordinating the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme at a local level. Over the past year, referrals to Waverley's Family Support Service has continued to increase and the team no longer have the capacity to meet demand. In order to respond to this extra case load, and accommodate the requirements of the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, two extra posts will need to be established in the structure – ie to increase the size of the team from 3 FTE Family Co-ordinators to 5 FTE. The Council already has external funding for one of these posts through the Government's Troubled Families Programme, and the second post can be funded in full through Waverley's allocation from the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

### **Potential Risks and Mitigation**

13. Although the Council has one of the best performing Family Support Services in the County, with a significant track record of supporting vulnerable families with complex needs, it may still be necessary to secure more specialist expertise depending on the issues presented by the households. This may include specialists in dealing with such conditions such as for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or other psychological or physical health needs. The Council will be able to make use of the Government's funding and in addition to this, obtain access to relevant health services to ensure that all the needs of the families are properly addressed.
14. There is a significant demand on social rented housing in the borough and a limited supply of Council housing and housing provided by Housing Associations to meet this demand. Therefore, it is proposed to source accommodation in the private or community sector that has not been earmarked for Waverley residents.
15. Waverley is the largest borough in Surrey and the most rural, and therefore lacking some of the basic infrastructure that can make it more difficult to access essential services. This does lead to greater risks of social isolation for Waverley's more vulnerable households and is something that will need to be factored into the support the Council provides for the Syrian Refugee families to ensure that they are able to secure the help they need to get back on their feet.
16. The Council's Family Support Team is already operating at full capacity with a number of local Waverley families waiting to enter the programme. This report includes recommendations to increase the staffing in the team to accommodate this demand, funded from the Government's Troubled Families programme that the Council already receives. It is anticipated that given the intensive nature of the support that will be needed by Syrian families, and reflecting feedback from the other boroughs and districts in Surrey, it is proposed that an additional post will need to be recruited to the team which will be funded in full from the funding allocation provided by the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

17. The longer term costs of accommodating the needs of the Syrian Refugee Families are unlikely to fall on Waverley's budgets. It is helpful to note that a key part of the assistance provided by the Council's Family Support Team is to help working age members of the household to integrate into the community, participate in the voluntary sector, access paid employment and become full, productive and independent members of the local community.
18. The Council may not receive any families through the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme even though it may have geared up to receive them. This risk is mitigated by utilising the services of an existing team (Waverley's Family Support Team) rather than creating an entirely separate function to lead the Council's response and making use of existing national Troubled Families Funding.

### **Recommendation**

The Executive are asked to recommend to the Council that it agrees that:

1. the Family Support Team be increased by 1 FTE to enable the service to respond to the needs of current Waverley families, paid for from the Government's Troubled Families Grant;
2. Waverley participates in the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme by offering to assist up to five Syrian Refugee Households over the next five years; and
3. an additional post of Family Co-ordinator (Post TF05) in the Family Support Team be established to facilitate Waverley's participation in the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme and paid for from the Government's funding for the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme.

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### **Background Papers**

Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme – Guidance for local authorities and partners (Home Office)

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