

**ITEM No ...4.....**

**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 16 NOVEMBER 2020**  
**REPORT ON: HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION PROGRAMME**  
**REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**  
**REPORT NO: 135-2020**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members on progress with the implementation of our programme to support refugees in Dundee as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme (VCRS).

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee: -

- a) Notes the progress made in welcoming and resettling refugees to Dundee, and the support provided by the Council and its partners.
- b) Notes the changes in the Home Office funded scheme for the year from April 2020 including the recent Covid-129 during the lockdown period due to Covid-19.

**3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no financial implications for the Council or its partners arising from this report. The VPRS/VCRS schemes and its worldwide successor scheme (UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)) are fully funded by the Home Office. Fully recovered cumulative expenditure to the end of 2019/20 was £2.416m.

**4 BACKGROUND**

4.1 In September 2015, both the Prime Minister and Scotland’s First Minister made commitments to helping those affected and displaced by the civil war in Syria, launching the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The Prime Minister committed to resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK and to providing financial aid in the region. The First Minister said that Scotland would take a minimum of 10% of the total number coming to the UK.

By the end of 2017, Scotland had resettled 2000 people in 31 Local Authorities. Scotland’s communities have been rightly commended for their efforts and enthusiasm in welcoming and accepting people who have been displaced by the war in Syria. In 2017 the scheme was expanded to include other nationalities who have been displaced.

The current VPRS and VCRS schemes came to an end in March 2020, replaced with a new global resettlement scheme, United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS).

The UK Government has confirmed that they have an ongoing commitment to continue to resettle the world’s most vulnerable refugees. In the first year of this scheme, which was to begin on 1st April 2020, the UK aimed to resettle 5000 of the most vulnerable refugees. Due to the Covid pandemic this has not proceeded as planned. The Government are committed to restarting resettlement as soon as restrictions allow. Local Authorities have been advised that the funding for each person resettled in the UK will be maintained at current levels.

Priority will continue to be given to the most vulnerable refugees identified by UNHCR, however the geographical focus will expand beyond the Middle East and North Africa to respond to any international crisis.

## 4.2 Overview of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) are managed migration schemes, run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and were set up in January 2014 to help the most vulnerable refugees.

The schemes are based on need (as opposed to a quota). Individuals identified by UNHCR are allowed to bring immediate family with them, limited to one spouse/partner and their minor dependent children (under 18 not living an independent life). Families generally compose four to six people inclusive of the applicant. The schemes prioritise survivors of torture and violence, woman and girls at risk and those in need of medical care. The Home Office works with UNHCR to identify suitable applicants and ensures all security checks are complete before they are allowed entry to the UK.

Dundee City Council involvement in the schemes was endorsed by Dundee City Council Policy and Resources Committee on 14 September 2015 (Article X of the minute of the meeting. 347-2015 refers). Since 2015, Dundee has welcomed approximately 50 families (approximately 200 individuals) to be resettled in Dundee mainly from Syria but also small numbers from Iraq, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan.

The VPRS and VCRS are delivered as a collaborative between Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership, Dundee City Council, NHS Tayside, Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action, Police Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions, Scottish Refugee Council and Scottish Fire and Rescue through the Dundee Humanitarian Protection Programme.

In line with the Scottish Government's New Scots Strategy, the Dundee Humanitarian Protection Programme views refugee integration as a two-way process, bringing positive change for refugees and host communities and helping to build a more compassionate and diverse society. This aim is focused around seven wellbeing outcomes as follows:

- Healthy – Children and adults are able to access appropriate healthcare and are enabled to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing.
- Independent – Individuals and families are provided with safe, secure and suitable housing that will enable to the settle and build a new life.
- Safe – Children and adults are safe from harm and abuse.
- Achieving – Children and adults are able to learn English. Children are supported to access Nursery/Education and become active learners. Adults are supported to access Employment, Training or Further Education as appropriate to their circumstances and preferences.
- Included – Children and adults are included in communities in Dundee.
- Respected – Children and adults are given a voice, and involved in the decisions that affect their wellbeing and integration into Dundee.
- Positive Experiences – Children and adults have positive experiences of supports and services designed to assist them to build a new life in Dundee.

Appendix 1 provides a short case study demonstrating how the Humanitarian Protection Programme supports individuals to develop and improve their language and employability skills leading to a positive outcome.

## 4.3 COVID-19 lockdown and Recovery Plan

The refugee families are isolated for various reasons and so during those early first weeks of lockdown, partners worked hard to let families know that support will continue and that help is available to them when they need it.

The Covid-19 restrictions changed the way organisations were able to deliver services to our resettled families. Scottish Refugee Council support staff responded immediately by ensuring all refugee families had access to a digital means of communication; supported and provided advice to families who were self isolating; provided accurate translated information as guidance

changed and developed social network groups involving peer volunteers to ensure everyone was in regular contact and so that no one was isolated during lockdown. Peer volunteers continue to collate and send out a fortnightly newsletter to keep people updated and in touch with the service. The day to day support work continues virtually and staff are beginning to plan ways to return to face to face support as guidance changes.

Pre-lockdown the Dundee Council ESOL team delivered 34 different community based learning opportunities each week to around 150 adult learners. The week before lockdown, staff delivered learning packs to all learners and moved to a digital forum to post videos and conduct sessions on digital platforms. We have been overwhelmed by the level of interaction with the online posts and activities and the commitment of adult learners across the city to stay in touch and learn new skills.

Our other partners, DCC Employability Team and Project Scotland, were in regular contact with the support staff and ESOL staff, were able to provide their service by using digital platforms and were able to support a number of job and college applications during lockdown.

With the easing of restrictions, organisations are currently making first tentative steps back towards limited face-to-face work to support the needs of the most vulnerable, including those who have little or no English, no literacy in their own language, generally have the poorest mental health and are isolated from friends and relatives.

## **5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.

## **6 CONSULTATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council Management Team were consulted in the preparation of this report and agree with its content.

## **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 None

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DS/EH

5 November 2020



## Appendix 1

Mohamad left Syria in 2013 due to the war and was resettled in Dundee with his wife and 2 children in March 2017 as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. Mohamad was motivated to learn English and find employment as soon as he could. He enrolled on the community English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class at Mitchell Street Centre and attended 16 hours of English classes a week. In order to quickly improve his English language skills he also used a number of online English learning resources out with his classes. He completed the first 'Get Ready for Work Course', a partnership between Dundee City Council's Employability and ESOL services where he increased his confidence in applying for employment in the UK. Mohamad had worked as an accountant in Syria but also had bus driving experience whilst displaced in Lebanon. He was able to use his international driving license for a year in the UK however he was keen to pass his UK driving test to increase his employment prospects so began lessons and passed his theory and practical test first time. After a year studying English at Mitchell Street Centre, Mohamad moved to a more advanced ESOL class at Dundee and Angus College. He continued to be supported by the Employability team and independently studied for his PCP (bus driving theory test). In 2019 Mohamad was offered the opportunity to apply for a post of a bus driver with Travel Dundee with support from the staff who ran the Get Ready for Work course. He was enthusiastic about the possibility of employment as a bus driver, passed his medical and then sat his bus driver test, which he passed first time. He is now employed as a bus driver and has said he loves this job and is optimistic about his future in Dundee. He plans to establish his own accounting business as he studies and improves his English even further.



Thank you to Mohamad for giving permission for his story and photo to be shared.

