

**To:** Housing and Homelessness Panel  
**Date:** 7 November 2024  
**Report of:** Head of Housing Services  
**Title of Report:** Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To report back on Implementation of Refugee Resettlement and the viability of the scheme.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member with responsibility:</b>	Councillor Linda Smith, Housing and Communities
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Support Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Resettlement Commitments for New Refugee Families
<b>Recommendation(s): That the Committee resolves to: Accept report and scheme updates</b>	

**Appendices: none**

## Introduction and background

- Oxford City Council has successfully participated in government schemes to support refugee resettlement since 2015. Between 2015 - 2023 the Council helped to resettle 52 families: 30 families (126 individuals) within Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) and 22 families (95 individuals) through the Afghan schemes (namely Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy (ARAP), Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)) and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). The Syrian scheme is now closed with UKRS superseding it as the UK global resettlement scheme. The two schemes to resettle Afghans continue under ACRS and ARAP.
- In 2023, Cabinet approved the corporate commitment to resettle at least 8 families (29 individuals minimum) per year from the government approved resettlement schemes as detailed above. Funding for resettlement work comes from central government tariff funding and the viability of the commitment is linked to sourcing appropriate accommodation and subsequent grant funding to help families integrate. The report directed officers to report back on an annual basis on the viability of the scheme. This update sets out progress, which to date has been positive with the Council successfully on track to resettle 8 families in 2024.

## **Global and National Context**

3. There continues to be growing number of forcibly displaced people [circa 122.6 million globally](#), hence the ongoing need to support families to resettle.
4. There are a number of families, abroad and in the UK, in transitional accommodation, already approved under UKRS/ACRS/ARAP that remain unmatched, key factors include large households or having specific need for an adapted property to meet complex medical needs.

## **Oxford City - wider migration context**

5. There remains one contingency hotel in the city and 45 dispersal units for families and single people seeking asylum. These sites are managed by the Home Office and the Council supports those households who lose their accommodation when their refugee status is recognised following a successful asylum claim, in line with our statutory homelessness duties.
6. The Council continues to work on supporting Ukrainian's who have settled through the government visa schemes and the team works hard to secure move on accommodation, including into the private rented sector.
7. Prevailing housing conditions including continuing rent increases put pressure on refugee families sustaining their tenancies, much like other households in Oxford.
8. The work of the Council's resettlement programme has instigated and led to the Council applying for accreditation to become a Local Authority of Sanctuary.
9. The Council continues to work collaboratively with County and District colleagues through the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership.

## **Resettlement Phase 1 (2015-2021)**

10. The SVPRS scheme successfully resettled 30 families and the last SVPRS family exited support in November 2023. To prevent homelessness and maintain landlord relationships, officer involvement has subsequently been required to assist a small number of SVPRS families.

## **Resettlement Phase 2 (2021-2023)**

11. Phase 2 contract commissioned in November 2021 for 2 years was extended until September 2025 to resettled 22 families to continue integration support to families who arrived in the summer 2023.
12. ARAP/ACRS schemes are designed as 3-year programmes as opposed to 5-year UKRS/SVPRS. The first families from Phase 2 will start exiting the scheme from December 2024 onwards. After the closure to the resettlement scheme, the families will access support services in the same manner as the rest of the community. Where specialist support is required, referrals to mainstream services are made.
13. All, but one of the families continue to live in the original property that they were placed in upon arrival. They have been successfully supported with renewing their tenancies without major rent increases allowing long term sustainability. Three single individuals have moved out of Oxford, but all other families intend to remain in Oxford city.

## **Resettlement Phase 3 (2024-2026)**

14. The Council is on track to resettle 8 families in 2024. This has been facilitated through a new service agreement for the provision of comprehensive bespoke person-centred support for refugee families. The contract has been awarded to Asylum Welcome and three sub-contractors offering specialist support, following a tender process in summer 2023. This will ensure refugee families are empowered to manage their own resettlement journey.
15. Additional collaborations have also been developed with other local providers to enhance English skills for adults via ESOL provision.
16. The properties procured in 2024 are a mix of social tenancies through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) (comprising of 1 x 4-bedroom (6 ppl) and 3 x 2-bedroom properties (2ppl, 2ppl, 3ppl)) and private rented sector (PRS) properties (comprising of: 1x 2-bedroom property (3ppl), 1x 3-bedroom (4ppl), 1x 4-bedroom (5ppl), 1 x 5-bedroom (7ppl)).
17. The planning work has started on procuring further 8 properties for 2025. These will also be a mix of LAHF (3) and PRS (min 5) properties. Social enterprise Beam has been contracted to source properties and develop networks with new landlords. Marketing and communication tools are being used to advertise the need for properties through an updated website, landlord's forum, and media adverts.
18. In June 2025, a review of Phase 3 will be completed to check on progress and assess viability to decide whether to continue beyond January 2026. The Council may extend the contract year on year for up to a further 5 years to 2031 on the assumption that a minimum of 8 households (29 ppl) are resettled per year and that the last arrival in year 5 will require the 2-year support service.

**Additional benefits of the Council's participation in Resettlement Schemes**

19. Resettlement Programme continues to be financially self-sufficient, with all Council staffing required to make the scheme a success, paid for from the grant.
20. Resettlement grant funding has also enabled the Council to work in partnership to support other projects which provide supplementary services for refugee families, for example the School Advocacy Project and Health Access Project via Asylum Welcome, a dedicated counselling service via Refugee Resource, and a Refugee Employment Support Programme (RESP) via Aspire and other local organisations.

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**Background Papers:** None

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