

Appendix 1

Birmingham LAHF and Afghan Refugees

Birmingham Context on Afghan Refugees

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- In July 2021, Cabinet approved the arrival of 80 individuals under the initial Afghan Assistance and Relocation Policy in 2021/22
 - In December 2021, Cabinet approved the arrival of 110 individuals under the combined Afghan schemes, for the years 2022/23 and 2023/24
 - Responsibility was delegated to the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety & Equalities and the corporate lead officer for migration to decide whether to continue to resettle refugees on the Afghan schemes at this same rate for up to two further years (2024/25 and 2025/26). The reason for this was lack of clarity from Government at the time, regarding the length of the arrivals period on the Afghan schemes.

Current situation

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- Since 2021, BCC has seen a steady flow of arrivals under the Afghan schemes.
 - In 2022, BCC's Year 1 "Arrivals, Orientation & Accommodation" service was recommissioned, which meant a pause in welcoming arrivals to the city.
 - Since re-mobilising this service in November 2022, BCC has welcomed well over half the annual allocation of individuals under the Afghan scheme. This has taken place via a new subcontracted accommodation provider (Claremont Living – former arrangement was with Spring Housing). The Home Office has a further list of 80 Afghan scheme individuals looking to move to Birmingham.
 - All referrals under the Afghan scheme are in-country referrals – from bridging hotels or other local authorities.
 - Given the length of stay for Afghan families in bridging hotels, the Home Office is also encouraging families to follow the "Find your Own Accommodation Pathway" in the private rented sector.
 - There is currently a myriad of pathways whereby families are coming to / being referred to Birmingham. Where families have the choice, Birmingham is a popular one.
 - It is likely that we will have more Afghan families living in Birmingham through secondary migration than just those that we knowingly resettle through the Afghan schemes.
 - A large portion of families needing accommodation on the Afghan schemes are large families (8,9,10+ family members) requiring 4+ bedroom properties.

Implications of LAHF scheme on refugee integration

- Government has confirmed that individuals will attract the tariffs specific to their resettlement scheme and accommodation type. For Afghans, this is £20,520 minimum per person over 3 years.
- For those properties being provided under the “main programme” (2-4 bedrooms) it will be important to avoid working in conflict with BCC’s commissioned providers who are already sourcing this size of property for Afghan arrivals.
- In order to genuinely add value, BCC needs to maintain the focus on larger, 3+ bedroom properties. This is already the focus of our property acquisition scheme.
- Individuals arriving will be entitled to integration support. Subject to numbers and values this could be varied into our existing contracts; alternatively, it would be separately commissioned via the new Flexible Contracting Agreement.
- Impact of adding to existing pledges could be as follows:
 - Adding to BCC’s existing pledge to this degree (80-200) individuals will likely result in the busiest ever period for the Council in terms of individual arrivals and coordination.
 - Added to this is the existing situation with Afghan arrivals where the pledge is likely to be delivered much faster than expected.
 - We will need to make sure we are well-staffed for this, alongside the necessary commissioning resource.