

SYRIAN REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS UPDATE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update regarding the Council's role in rehousing and supporting Syrian Refugees. It also provides information about the Asylum Seeker Project operated by G4S.

Summary

2. The Syrian Refugee project was established in 2016 as a direct result of the Syrian conflict. The Council agreed to accept 10 families initially, but this has now increased to 14 families to enable families to be reunited. Currently 54 individuals are being supported through the programme.
3. The G4S project now supports 92 people in Darlington. Whilst G4S are funded directly for this contract which includes housing and support, various statutory and voluntary organisations are engaged with individual asylum seekers and also have links with G4S.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that the content of this report be noted.

Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth and
Neighbourhood Services

Background Papers

Pauline Mitchell: Extension 5832

S17 Crime and Disorder	The project aims to integrate Asylum Seekers in to the community to reduce the risks of crime
Health and Well Being	A number of people have experienced traumatic situations as well as the upheaval of moving to a different country. Some will need extensive support to adjust
Carbon Impact	There is no direct impact
Diversity	The project introduces people from a number of countries of origin and will support them to integrate

Wards Affected	Those where Asylum Seekers and Refugees may reside
Groups Affected	Asylum Seekers and Refugees
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no direct impact
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	As part of the “building strong communities” approach support to Syrian Refugees and Asylum Seekers enables integration.
Efficiency	There is no direct impact
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	There is no direct impact.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The rehousing of Refugees in Darlington began in 2016 as the Government responded to the crisis in Syria. The Council agreed to take ten families as part of this programme. We were provided with grant funding to set up a support service to assist with transition and integration into the community.
6. By November 2018 there were 14 Syrian refugee households living in Darlington being supported through the Council project. They are made up of 54 individuals:
26 Adults (13 female, 13 male)
28 Children (9 female, 19 male)
7. They are living in the following properties:
2 Council properties
2 Housing Association
10 private renting
8. All children who are being housed through the Council project are all allocated a school placement prior to arrival. All adults within the Council project are registered at Darlington College for various ESOL language classes and some have gone on to further education. All of the adults are also supported to register with appropriate services, such as, GP, dentist and the Job Centre. On the whole, the project has gone well with all families integrating well into their locality
9. Separately, the Government have continued to distribute Asylum Seekers through another contract. The Home Office have awarded a contract to G4S for the whole of the North East and, to date, they have placed 92 Asylum Seekers in Darlington. The Council are not directly involved in this project and only privately rented properties are used.
10. In April 2017, information provided by the national project compared the other 13 local authorities in the North East and found that Darlington came 10th in terms of population of asylum seekers as a percentage of the population (0.04%). No further information has been received since to suggest that this has altered. Among all North East wards, none of Darlington’s wards feature in the 10 with the highest

proportion of asylum seekers as a percentage of the population. The Government has set a limit on the number of Asylum Seekers that a local authority can receive and Darlington does not exceed the cluster limit of 1 asylum seeker to 200 people in the population.

11. Although the Council's Syrian Refugee contract and the G4S Asylum Seeker Contract are completely separate, inevitably there are expectations by the local community that similar levels of service will be provided. However, the Council employs a full-time Refugee Support officer out of the funding we receive, but G4S employ one Support Officer to work across the North East. For some time now Asylum Seekers have been approaching Housing Services for advice and support in respect of education, health and housing. Where possible, these are referred to G4S but it has put increasing pressure on our services. Similarly, there is added pressure on our Housing Options Team when Asylum Seekers are given leave to remain and need to move out of their supported accommodation at relatively short notice. An additional Support Volunteer has therefore been employed on a temporary basis to cope with the increasing demand and liaise more closely with G4S and their clients.