

EXECUTIVE 13th January 2022

Report Title	Afghan Refugee Resettlement
Report Author	David Watts, Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Executive Member	Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974	Not applicable

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Home Office and MHCLG Afghan Resettlement and Relocation letter to all Council Leaders and Chief Executives, 13th September 2021

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval from the Executive for the proposed use of the Local Authority Tariff component of the Integration Package for Afghan citizens resettled in North Northamptonshire.
- 1.2. To seek delegation of authority from the Executive to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing in liaison with the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing, to take any further decisions and/or actions required to deliver the Afghan Resettlement programme.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 North Northamptonshire Council has pledged to support a minimum of ten Afghan families to resettle in North Northamptonshire. This includes the need to

identify suitable housing and ensure the provision of appropriate wraparound support services to aid integration.

- 2.2 An integration funding package including a core Local Authority Tariff of £20,520 per person over three years is provided by the Home Office to Councils to support Afghan families to resettle in the UK.
- 2.3 The Executive is asked to support the proposals for how the Local Authority Tariff is used to support the resettlement of a minimum of ten Afghan families in North Northamptonshire.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Approves the proposed approach regarding the use of the Local Authority Tariff set out in this report at paragraphs 5.4 - 5.15 to ensure that suitable accommodation, tenancy and community support can be provided to enable the successful resettlement of Afghan refugees under The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) in North Northamptonshire.
- b) Delegates authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, in liaison with the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing, to take any further decisions and/or actions required to appropriately resettle Afghan refugees in North Northamptonshire.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations:-

- a) Set a clear approach for how the Local Authority Tariff will be effectively used to support and help the integration of Afghan refugees into their local communities.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme provides assistance to current and former Locally Employed Staff (LES) in Afghanistan. Eligible families are those who the UK government considers having put themselves in the most danger and contributed the most to the UK mission in Afghanistan.
- 4.2 The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is an additional commitment by the UK Government to resettle up to a further 20,000 people leaving Afghanistan, in addition to those brought to the UK under ARAP. The ACRS will prioritise those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and vulnerable people including women and children.
- 4.3 All those brought to the UK under ARAP and ACRS have the right to work, access to education and healthcare and to apply for public funds.

- 4.4 On 13th September 2021, the Home Office and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, announced the funding package associated with the ACRS and how this interacted with the existing ARAP scheme.
- 4.5 The integration packages for the ACRS and ARAP scheme were aligned and developed to ensure comprehensive support for ARAP/ACRS arrivals to acclimatise to the UK, learn the language (where appropriate), and find work, thus enabling rapid self-sufficiency and social integration in UK communities. The package covers health, education and integration support costs and Table 1 below provides the detail to this.

Table 1: Integration package for Afghan citizens and other refugees resettled under ARAP and ACRS

ACRS/ARAP	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
LA Tariff (per person)	£10,500	£6,000	£4,020	£20,520
Education (per child)	Up to £4,500			Up to £4,500
English Language (per adult)	£850			£850
Health (per person)	£2,600			£2,600

Source: Home Office and MHCLG Afghan Resettlement and Relocation letter to all Council Leaders and Chief Executives, 13th September 2021

- 4.6 As Table 1 shows, in addition to the specific funding allocations for education, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and health, a Local Authority Tariff (hereafter known as “Tariff”) of £20,520 per person over three years is provided.
- 4.7 In addition, there is funding via the **ARAP and ACRS Additional Housing Support Costs**. Recent clarity regarding the detail provides that this fund can be used to:
- Meet the shortfall between rent and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates on privately rented properties of 3 bedrooms or more
 - Support families on Universal Credit that are limited by the benefit cap
 - Meet other exceptional costs that are not otherwise met by these criteria (for example special educational needs, adaptations, additional social care costs)
- 4.8 The funding in respect of (a) is limited to a one-off upfront payment of up to £3,000 per household in Year 1, with additional funding of up to £1,500 in Years 2 and 3 in exceptional circumstances where the household has been unable to secure employment to meet their accommodation costs unaided.
- 4.9 With a high demand for, and shortage of social housing in North Northamptonshire, the Council has focused on facilitating the resettlement of Afghan refugees into the private rented sector (PRS). A supply of privately rented properties available for a period of at least 12 months, has been actively sought for this purpose.

- 4.10 Working closely with East Midlands Councils (EMC) via the Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP), housing officers have progressed enquiries with many private landlords who had registered a willingness to assist Afghan families either with North Northamptonshire Council directly or via the Government's Housing Portal. This process is ongoing until viable property offers can be made in order that the Home Office can begin the matching process of identifying an Afghan family.
- 4.11 The potential viability of each property offer is assessed with priority given to properties with rents that are not significantly above LHA rates in order to maximise the chances of properties remaining affordable and being sustained in the long term.
- 4.12 The physical standard of each prospective private rented sector property is assessed in terms of compliance with relevant Health and Safety regulations. Council officers conduct Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspections to ensure suitability in this regard.
- 4.13 To secure properties, private landlords require an adequate package of funding and assurances. The Tariff and Housing Support Costs Fund can be utilised by Councils to assist with various housing costs including:
- Deposits
 - Rent in advance
 - Rent guarantee's for up to eight weeks where there is a delay between securing the accommodation and a household occupying
 - Rent shortfalls where rents are above LHA rates
 - Furniture, white goods and any decoration that is required
 - WIFI
 - Housing related tenancy support

5 Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The use of the Tariff component of the Integration Package (and the ARAP and ACRS Additional Housing Support Costs funding) in North Northamptonshire is important to the Council and those Afghan citizens looking to settle in the area to support:
- integration into the local community;
 - access to local services, including healthcare and education;
 - successful housing resettlement;
 - long-term tenancy sustainment; and
 - the mitigation of other risks and potential costs such as rent arrears.
- 5.2 Although there is specific guidance on how the ARAP and ACRS Additional Housing Support Costs funding can be spent, without a clear and agreed approach to how the Tariff is allocated, there is a risk that the funding could be allocated ad hoc and without appropriate management and monitoring.
- 5.3 Additionally, there is the risk that without appropriate support in place via the Tariff for the Afghan citizens, those resettled may lose their tenancy, be unable

to access benefits and/or employment and experience health issues. The introduction of this methodology allows for a consistent structured and supportive approach to the resettlement of Afghan citizens across North Northamptonshire over the next three years.

- 5.4 Based on enquiries and negotiations with private rented sector landlords to date, it will be necessary for North Northamptonshire Council to utilise a proportion of the Tariff for housing related costs in order to secure suitable PRS accommodation offers. Housing costs will vary dependent on the property size, condition and location. The required contribution from the Tariff will also depend on the individual circumstances of the family for example if they secure employment.
- 5.5 Despite the difficulties in providing an estimated housing cost, due to variables around properties and individual household circumstances, Table 2 provides an example of likely required costs for a 3-bedroom home for a couple with three children for whom the Council will receive a Tariff of £102,600 over three years.

Table 2: Estimated housing funding requirements to secure and sustain 3 bedroom PRS accommodation for a couple with three children (one family)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Tariff (5 persons)	£52,500	£30,000	£20,100	£102,600
Estimated housing related costs				
Damage Deposit	£900	-	-	£900
Rent in advance	£900	-	-	£900
Rent gap (to cover time period between property offer form and household matching)	£1,800	-	-	£1,800
Rent top up (gap with LHA)	£2,400	£2,100	£1,800	£6,300
Rent guarantee / arrears funding	£1,000	£500	£500	£2,000
Furniture and white goods	£1,500	-	-	£1,500
Decoration	£1,000	-	-	£1,000
Wi-Fi	£400	-	-	£400
Utility start up fund	£500	-	-	£500
Tenancy Support	£8,000	£6,000	£4,000	£18,000
TOTAL HOUSING COSTS	£18,400	£8,600	£6,300	£33,300

- 5.6 Although the Council will seek to meet some of the eligible housing costs from the ARAP and ACRS Additional Housing Costs funding (in particular the rent top up which is limited to up to £4,500 per household over 3 years), Table 2 evidences that overall housing costs are likely to significantly exceed the limited and specific funding available under ARAP and ACRS Additional Housing Costs

and hence the Tariff will be required to support with securing and sustaining tenancies.

- 5.7 All private rented sector landlords require a month's rent in advance and usually the equivalent value for a damage deposit as a minimum. There is likely to be a period of time between the Council securing a property and a family being matched, accepted and relocated to occupy the accommodation hence a Rent Gap payment has been assumed. The rent top up payment assumes that there will be a difference between Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (for which benefits can be claimed) and actual rent liability. Research with landlords to date in respect of potentially viable properties has shown rent levels to be 21%-46% higher than LHA rates. As per section 4.11 of this report, the Council has sought to discount any properties that are significantly higher than LHA rates. For the worked example in Table 2, a top up of £200pcm is assumed with a reduction over time on the basis that some household members will be supported into employment.
- 5.8 The Council is working with a local voluntary sector organisation in relation to sourcing furniture and white goods therefore the cost assumed in Table 2 for these items may be reduced. Decoration costs for some properties will also be unnecessary where a property is already in a good lettable condition. It is envisaged that any underspend on these items might be required for other miscellaneous essentials.
- 5.9 With regards to tenancy support, it is proposed that the Council employ two Tenancy Support Workers to provide early intensive support to the ten Afghan families, and that the Tariff is utilised to fund the salary and on costs of these two posts. Robust tenancy support will be essential to ensure successful housing resettlement, long-term tenancy sustainment and the mitigation of other risks and potential costs such as rent arrears. It is assumed that the requirement for such intensive tenancy support will reduce over time which is reflected in the reducing costs shown in Table 2 as the need for such staff capacity reduces.
- 5.10 The worked example in Table 2 estimates that 32% of the Tariff over the three-year funding period will be required to ensure a settled accommodation solution for an Afghan family. Whilst there is likely to be variance in housing funding requirements between individual families, the Executive are asked to consider approving, in principle, the proposal to direct this necessary proportion of funding to housing related costs to ensuring that the Council can source, provide and help to sustain accommodation for our Afghan families.
- 5.11 The Council is currently taking steps to draw down funding from the Tariff to secure, and to cover the rental liability for, its first four formal PRS property offers; and the Council is waiting for families to be matched to these properties.
- 5.12 The Council has existing knowledge of resettling families under UK resettlement schemes within its resources so in addition to the proposal to employ two Tenancy Support Workers, the Council is proposing a three-year secondment for existing employees in scope (or proportion of their time) to work alongside the Tenancy Support Workers as a Resettlement Support Officer. This role would focus on helping relocated families to settle into their new community, such as supporting them to access health services, schooling for any children, interpretation, training and employment.

5.13 The proposed secondment salary of £33,782pa plus additional on-costs (approximately £11,000pa) would be covered by the Tariff. However, dependent on the number of families resettling in North Northamptonshire there may be an increase over time in the community support needed, based on previous experience of providing support resettled families, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: The proposed sliding scale of support by the Resettlement Support Officer

Number of Families Supported	FTE	Salary Costs pa (including on-costs ¹)
1-3	0.2	£8,986
4-5	0.5	£22,564
6+	1.0	£44,930

5.14 A separate budget code has been established to monitor spend against the Tariff, which will be overseen by the Assistant Director for Housing and Communities.

5.15 The Council has also initiated conversations with voluntary sector partners to discuss their role in being able to support these families and the Council has asked these partners to prepare an offer of support. Conversations have been had with Citizen Advice Service, (Corby and Kettering) and Groundwork Northamptonshire, as to how their support could be incorporated into their current activities, such as The Green Patch and Housing Support.

5.16 The alternative choice is not to set out a clear approach for how the Tariff will be applied in North Northamptonshire and the risks associated with this decision are set out in paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 and section 6.3

6 Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 An integration package including a core local authority tariff of £20,520 per person over three years is provided to Councils to support Afghan families to resettle in the UK.

6.1.2 The Council has pledged to support a minimum of ten families to resettle, however, the number of individual people this could cover is unknown at this time

6.1.3 Despite the difficulties in providing an estimated housing cost requirement due to variables around properties and individual household circumstances, Table 4 provides an example of likely required housing and community support costs for

¹ Based on 33%

couple with three children housed in 3-bedroom PRS accommodation for whom the Council will receive a Tariff of £102,600 over three years.

Table 4: Estimated housing and community support funding requirements to secure and sustain 3-bedroom PRS accommodation for a couple with three children (one family)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Tariff (5 persons)	£52,500	£30,000	£20,100	£102,600
ARAP and ACRS Additional Housing Support Costs	Minimum £3,000	Minimum £1,500		Minimum £4,500
Housing Costs (Table 2)	£18,400	£8,600	£6,300	£33,300
Community Support (Table 3)	£8,986	£8,986	£8,986	£26,958
TOTAL COSTS	£30,386	£18,336	£16,036	£64,758

6.1.4 Although expenditure in Table 4 is modelled on housing and community support costs for a couple with three children (one family) in 3-bedroom PRS accommodation, the projections demonstrate that there is sufficient funding available to meet the recommended approach.

6.1.5 Once 6 or more families are resettled in North Northamptonshire, this will require full time support from the Resettlement Support Officer, meaning that Community Support Costs (from the Tariff) will be £44,930pa as set out in Table 3 which represents better value for money per household when compared to the worked example set out in Table 4.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 There is the initial risk that the funding would be inconsistently applied by Officers, which could potentially affect the reputation of the Council.

6.3.2 By having this methodology in place, it allows funding to be evenly distributed in supporting the resettlement of Afghan citizens.

6.3.2 There is the additional reputation risk to the Council, should the pledge to support the resettle of Afghan citizens not be met.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 Consultation has been undertaken with some key partners to inform this recommendation.:

- Local VCSE Organisations
- Private Landlords
- Local Authority Networks on Refugee Resettlement
- Private Rental Sector
- Regional Migration Partnership

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 Not applicable for this report although the work undertaken could be part of the scrutiny work programme.

6.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

6.6.1 This report will be considered by the EAP and the comments received will be incorporated.

6.7 Equality implications

6.7.1 The Council's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) are not in breach. The recommendations in this report seek to ensure the needs of Afghan refugees, matched to our property offers by the Home Office are fully supported to resettle into our community and sustain their private rented tenancies taking into account their cultural needs.

6.8 Climate Impact

6.8.1 Officers will seek to encourage VCSE organisations and Private Landlords to consider the environmental and climate impact of their projects and rental properties, in line with the council's priorities in this area.

6.9 Community Impact

6.9.1 The objectives of this approach are to ensure that the funding will provide support to those Afghan citizens looking to settle in this area of Northamptonshire to:

- integrate into the local community;
- have access to local services, including healthcare and education; and
- be able to contribute to the local community.

7 Background Papers

- 7.1 The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>.
- 7.2 Home Office and MHCLG Afghan Resettlement and Relocation letter to all Council Leaders and Chief Executives, 13th September 2021