# Afghanistan Refugee Resettlement Programme

**Summary**

Conversations have been taking place between district/city council colleagues and the County Council to create a systemwide view and understanding of our approach to the Afghanistan resettlement programme locally. This document provides a brief summary of each area’s current view and subsequently further detail on how the County Council is developing plans to support each area.

Taking learning from our approach to COVID we are keen to collaborate and work with each district/city council to develop a response and offer of support that makes sense for that place. Whilst we recognise that this offer might look and feel different in each area, we want to also ensure there are spaces to come together as a network to share learning, problem solve/collaborate and provide additional support where needed.

It is important to note that consistently across all conversations it was acknowledged that all plans are currently being developed as part of the existing LERS scheme and associated funding. Whilst it is anticipated that further changes are coming as a result of the current situation, no further decisions can be made until more national guidance is provided.

It is also recognised that the ask from MHCLG is for larger family accommodation so each area is working hard to identify suitable options – whilst recognising that this will be limited.

Overview:

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| **District/City Council** | **Current Status** | **Key Contact** |
| Huntingdonshire | There is a commitment politically to support the LERS scheme. Partnerships have been established between Chorus and Longhurst with a focus on the north of the County as they are the two largest stock holders – however looking at 2 or 3 properties.  The district Council will be supported by PARCA a Peterborough based charity already commissioned to support the Syrian programme. As a result, PCC will extend the contract and claim the financial support.  Already working with South Cambs in relation to housing stock due to opportunities to house more families via Ermine Street Housing.  Key elements of County support would be around access to education services and also other Statutory services dependent on the needs of the families. | Jon Collen |
| Fenland | There is a commitment politically to support the existing LERS scheme - if this was to be extended then officers would engage with members to get agreement.  They are looking to support one or two individuals and will continue to work with PARCA as this currently working well through the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme | Dan Horn |
| East Cambridgeshire | As the authority is not currently a housing stock authority and due to the rural nature have worked closely with Cambridge City in the past to provide offers via private landlords. This was previously explored as part of the Syrian Refugee programme  There is the opportunity under this scheme, for property to be provided if the wrap around support can be arranged via Cambridge City as explored previously. However, it is important to consider the risks of isolation due to there being no established Afghan communities currently.  Would value the opportunity to learn from other areas about previous schemes but also current plans and conversations will need to take place with Cambridge City. | Angela Parmenter |
| South Cambridgeshire | Properties have been offered via the original scheme with political agreement to support 3 large families. Therefore, working closely with Huntingdonshire due to properties currently being rented by a South Cambs housing company in the Huntingdonshire area.  Looking to commission and work with Cambridge City to provide the wraparound support – this has happened previously as part of the Syrian Refugee programme. | Peter Campbell |
| Cambridge City | There is a commitment to support the scheme but recognise the challenge of the cost of living in the City. There is currently a commitment to support 4 large houses a year as part of the Syrian programme so exploring what more can be done.  An in-house team has been in place since 2015 and are confident in ability to respond to the demand – but awaiting further clarification of financial support.  There are strong links in the County Council due to the established programme of support but keen to work with the other areas to share learning but also to identify other housing opportunities. | Jane Wilson |
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| Peterborough | There is a continued commitment to support families under this scheme and the intention is that the authority will continue to commission PARCA to coordinate this support.  A task and finish group has been established and properties are being identified to support families.  Being part of the Countywide discussions to share learning etc. will be helpful due to the support being offered to both Huntingdonshire and Fenland | Ian Phillips |

**County Offer**

This table sets out some key themes and opportunities being considered at a County level – whilst this list isn’t exhaustive it has been developed based on discussions with each district and city council but also the County Council’s ambitions to support where needed:

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| **Theme** | **Opportunities being explored** |
| Enabling Collaboration at a County level | * Creating a working group/forum for each authority to come together to share best practice/challenges/opportunities etc. to ensure there is a coordinated effort across the County * Understanding of current governance landscape to find the best space for these discussions to take place * Review of current County offers to assess whether more can be done – confirming SPOC network to ensure County are working in collaboration with each area (as part of wrap around offer) |
| Employment & Opportunities | * Working with our Skills service to explore opportunities for a bespoke ESOL offer * Understanding qualification transfer offers * Exploring employment opportunities within our own authority |
| Physical Goods | * Coordination of donations and distribution across the County – managing expectations etc. * Assess whether warehouse space is required * Engaging with commissioned services e.g. CLAS to expand furniture/white goods offer * Link into existing mechanisms to buy goods e.g. vouchers etc. via the County hub * Establish opportunities to link in with national gov.uk donation portal locally |
| Funding | * Explore opportunities for match funding * Sponsoring childcare places * Setting up a grant scheme * Bursaries for FE/HE |
| Systemwide Engagement | * Engagement with the Combined Authority regarding longer term housing opportunities * Establishing a role for CRG * Engagement with DWP to explore creative employment opportunities |
| Health | * Engagement with Public Health in relation to immunisations/vaccinations etc. * Understanding the support required in the context of COVID e.g. vaccination/compliance etc. |

Over the next week the team will continue to progress this offer – adding in other opportunities and developing the suggestions further. Therefore will continue to work with you all to ensure this is reflective and supportive of the work happening in your areas.