



Your Moray

REPORT TO: COMMUNITY PLANNING BOARD ON 11 AUGUST 2016

SUBJECT: SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (SVPRS)

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE), THE MORAY COUNCIL

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The reason for this report is to update the Community Planning Board of the progress in its commitment to resettle families under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS).

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Community Planning Board:

- (i) notes the progress being made in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme;
- (ii) agrees to continue to support the programme of resettlement and;
- (iii) notes the review to be undertaken in August 2016 on the future of the programme in Moray.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 At the Community Planning Board meeting held on 7 October 2015 (paragraph 3 of the Minute refers) the Board agreed to endorse Moray's participation in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) and agreed the project management and reporting arrangement as outlined in the report.

3.2 At the Community Planning Board meeting held on the 8 December 2015 the Board noted the management and reporting arrangements put in place by the Community Planning Officers Group; a date of readiness was agreed and a press

release issued to the public outlining the objectives of the Board (paragraph 4 of the Minute refers).

- 3.3 The date of readiness was met and the first 3 families arrived on 16 February 2016 with a fourth family arriving on 25 February 2016; both flights were scheduled flights to Aberdeen.

4. PROGRESS

- 4.1 There are four families with a total of 8 adults and 7 children with ages ranging from 10 months to 12 years old. The families have been located in Forres; 3 in council housing and 1 family in housing association stock.
- 4.2 Housing support services appointed a support worker and additional hours were given to provide English as an Additional Language (EAL) for Educational services and for English as a second or Other Language (ESOL).
- 4.3 The first week for the families was intensive as Biometric passports, bank accounts opened, benefit claims, educational and health assessments were crowded in that first week.
- 4.4 The voluntary input coordinated by Moray Supports Refugees (MSR) has been outstanding and their involvement over the period from announcement to now has been essential and valuable.
- 4.5 Two children are in primary school and one is now ready for secondary school. Three are in nursery and one will be admitted to primary school at the end of this summer. There has been good progress in language and attainment despite the difficulties faced by the children.
- 4.6 Families have received benefits but there have been a number of issues around child benefit and tax credits in particular which have required intensive work by welfare rights officers and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues at a local and national level to resolve.
- 4.7 The families have a number of complex health issues and appointments tend to last longer than normal as an interpreter has to be present. This has created pressure in the Forres GP practice. Steps such as learning how to use language line and make more use of the pharmacy service have been put in place. There was some difficulty accessing a dental practice near Forres and the nearest available is in Lossiemouth which is currently being used adding to the cost of transport.
- 4.8 Afternoon sessions have been provided for the families on the NHS, Equality issues and Scots law.
- 4.9 The families are beginning to settle into their new community and there are positive signs that integration is beginning to happen although there are still a number of issues that create difficulties such as family reunion. The families generally have low levels of literacy and require more ESOL support. The high cost of interpreters is eating into the money provided for their support.

- 4.10 The media strategy put in place provided a welcoming atmosphere and with the help of Moray Supports Refugees the local press were provided with a range of upbeat stories underlined with a positive message. The Forres Gazette, the local newspaper, was nominated and was runner up for a Scottish Refugee Council Media Award.
- 4.11 The management structure put in place with joint inter agency planning at both a strategic and operational level has proved highly effective and has demonstrated Community Planning working positively with good examples of collaborative working and cooperation within the Partnership and with other agencies such as the DWP.
- 4.12 A further offer of accommodation for an additional family has been made to the Home Office and we await a response. The Home Office is undertaking an evaluation of the programme in Scotland and we are currently carrying out a brief local evaluation in Moray which will include the family's views of the process.
- 4.13 It is hoped this will inform a review to be held this month into the next steps for Moray and the outcome of this review will be reported to the Board.

5. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 5.1 The costs of the scheme are within budget, however distances travelled by staff and the cost of initially having to use interpreters from Aberdeen, Glasgow and Inverness, has created pressure on available finance. This, as a result, does not allow for any increase in support directly to the families such as additional resource for ESOL or additional support worker time.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Four families of Syrian Refugees are now located in Forres and support is being provided.**
- 6.2 An integrated Community Planning approach has helped ease the arrival and resettlement process.**
- 6.3 The process is being evaluated and reviewed to look at how Moray goes forward with the Moray commitment.**

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Background Papers: