



Home Office Bridging Hotel and Afghan Resettlement Accommodation

For consideration by: Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date: 29 November 2021

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a strategic update on the Home Office Bridging Hotel and the Leicester City Council offer to re-settle 10 Afghan families within the City.

2. Recommended action

- 2.1 That members read, note and comment on the report.

3 Background

- 3.1 Leicester has agreed to participate in the accelerated relocation of Locally Employed Staff (LES) who have been supporting the UK forces in Afghanistan. The scheme has been prioritised due to the withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan, and the following escalation in violence.
- 3.2 The Afghan LES and their families are being offered relocation in recognition of the fact they were at increased personal risk, having worked side by side with coalition forces and officials.
- 3.3 The Home Office has currently placed a number of families within a bridging hotel in the City. Where these families will be settled permanently is still being determined, some may stay within Leicester.
- 3.4 The STAR AMAL team are now working with the families in the hotel, providing them with wrap around support.
- 3.5 The STAR AMAL team will also provide resettlement support to 10 families that will actually reside in Leicester once longer-term accommodation is identified for them.

5. Detailed report

5.1 Families within the hotel

- 5.1.1 There are 16 families made up of 74 individuals within the hotel (31 adults & 43 children) at the moment. All children of school age are in school and new arrivals have been found school places and are attending lessons and are doing well.
- 5.1.2 There have been a number of movements within the hotel of families leaving and being placed in their settled accommodation across the UK and others joining the bridging hotel from other areas of the country.

5.1.3 It should be noted that Leicester City is the only location in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to have a Home Office bridging hotel.

5.2 Support within the Hotel

5.2.1 Leicester City Council officially commenced wrap around support on the 4th October 2021 and work is underway with each family in the hotel. STAR AMAL have also begun the co-ordination of partners and external offers of support and a weekly meeting now takes place to co-ordinate these offers.

5.2.2 We are working with the Home Office to ensure all residents have their BRP (Biometric Residence Permits) and we are providing support in opening bank accounts and accessing GP services.

5.2.3 We have now engaged with both the male and female residents in the hotel to ask what enrichment activities they would like and that is now progressing. ESOL is underway for those in the hotel and childcare provision is also in place to allow parents to concentrate on their learning and family friendly sessions are being delivered at Leicester Central Library.

5.2.4 Leicester Diocese are delivering a 1 hour pre-natal session to pregnant mothers. The Minister delivering the sessions will also engage with the mothers on any clothing needs and will attend our weekly Bridging Hotel co-ordination meetings so that these need can be co-ordinated by STAR AMAL.

5.2.5 There is a Home Office representative now based in the hotel (since 11.10.2021) but their current focus is only on ensuring that the families have access to funds via their Aspen cards.

5.2.6 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Job Centre plus colleagues remain in the hotel 3 mornings a week working to organise benefit claims and support individuals into work. This has been challenging as individuals in the hotel are not there for long periods and may be offered settled accommodation anywhere in the UK. Therefore, focus has been for preparation to enter the job market at this stage.

5.3 Donations

5.3.1 The position remains the same in that there has been no need for donations identified. The City Council position therefore remains consistent in that financial donations to relevant charities is currently the best way to support this group or alternatively volunteering to help to support the work of the charities either as a direct volunteer or as a trustee or similar.

5.3.2 If needs are identified for those within the bridging hotel or for any re-settlement family within the City, we will use our existing links to source and co-ordinate offers to meet those needs.

5.3.3 A meeting has been arranged and will be ongoing chaired by Cllr Russell and Cllr Myers to co-ordinate the offers of support around not only the Afghan evacuees but also refugees and asylum seekers within the City. The first meeting took place on the 5th October 2021 and was well received by the voluntary, community and faith

groups in attendance. The meeting attendees specifically identified the need for volunteers noted in paragraph 5.3.1.

5.4 Re-settlement and Housing

- 5.4.1 Leicester City Council will re-settle 10 families which is 60 individuals as part of the re-settlement scheme. Many of those within the hotel are making requests to settle in Leicester and the Home Office has now confirmed that they will take into consideration the geographical preference of families, but this will not guarantee they would get the location they prefer.
- 5.4.2 We have had contact from 45 Landlords over the last 7 weeks offering a variety of accommodation from spare rooms in family homes to large residential properties some outside of Leicester itself. It should be noted that a number of the offers being made are not suitable for the scheme, but we are assessing and working with each Landlord on alternative letting options if they cannot be matched with the scheme requirements.
- 5.4.3 We expect to see our first re-settlement families arrive in the City in early November 2021.
- 5.4.4 We will be staggering the resettlement of families in the City and will be identifying accommodation a few units at a time. This is to ensure we can dedicate resources to re-settle each family appropriately and to reduce any impact on other residents also looking for accommodation in the City.
- 5.4.5 We do not expect the re-settlement of families to impact significantly on the Council's Housing Register as we are looking at accommodation options primarily in the Private Rented Sector.
- 5.4.6 The Home Office is funding support and resettlement for the Afghan LES and their families, this funding is being and will be utilised to carry out all this work.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 There is no net cost to the Council of providing support for Afghan resettlement. The cost the Council incurs in providing support at the bridging hotel will be re-imbursed by the Home Office. For the 10 families resettling in Leicester, the Council will receive the following amounts over a 3-year period (which is in line with amounts received under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme):

- £20,520 per person for integration services
- Up to £4,500 per child for education provision (subject to age)
- £850 for adults requiring English language provision
- £2,600 for the provision of health services.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant

6.2 Legal implications

n/a

6.3 Equalities implications

n/a

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

n/a

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

7. Background information and other papers:

n/a

8. Summary of appendices:

n/a

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

No