

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**Council**  
**Report of the Director of Social Services, Health &**  
**Housing - Mr Nick Jarman**

Matter for Information

**Wards Affected:** All wards

## **Syrian Vulnerable Family relocation scheme**

### **Purpose of the Report**

To update Council on the Syrian Vulnerable Families relocation scheme and the actions necessary to settle families into our community

### **Executive Summary**

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council ("the Council") pledged its commitment to settle five Syrian families before Christmas and a further five families in the second phase of the resettlement programme.

- A multiagency operational meeting has been established to enable the detailed planning and cooperation between services.
- British Red Cross (BRC) has been commissioned to provide the case worker support for these families
- The report provides a brief update on key areas of work including arrival day, accommodation, education, and health.

### **Background**

The Council pledged its commitment to settle five Syrian families before Christmas and a further five families in the second phase of the resettlement programme. The Home Office have confirmed that the cost of achieving the above is covered by a specific grant.

A multiagency operational meeting was established to enable the detailed planning and cooperation between services for the resettlement of

families locally. Membership of this group includes key external partners, Housing providers, Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), Health and Police representatives. This group met frequently prior to arrival of the families and has met twice since, to review progress, ensure all actions are complete and reflect on lessons learnt for phase two.

The BRC has been directly commissioned to provide the case worker support for these families, which includes settling the families, orientation, support and translation facilities. BRC have a clear programme of activities and support going forward and I am receiving positive feedback regarding these activities.

BRC have received a letter of intent which gives them the necessary comfort to make appropriate expenditure. The arrangement is in the process of being formalised through a grant agreement.

The following provides a brief update on key areas of work

1. Arrival day

On arrival day, notification was received from the Home office that one of the families would not be travelling. BRC (as our commissioned support provider) made detailed arrangements to meet our families at Manchester airport. There were some minor hiccups but generally the arrangements went well. I am pleased to report that the four families arrived safe and well. There is some learning for BRC, for example one family brought more luggage than had been anticipated. In addition, feedback was given to the Home Office to improve how arrivals are handled in the future.

2. Accommodation

The Council has secured the required accommodation. The families are happy with the quality of the accommodation. It was hoped that the family that did not travel would get the necessary permission to travel and as such a property was 'held' pending their arrival. It is noteworthy that the Home Office has confirmed that all legitimate expenses will be covered, including securing the property. Unfortunately the original family cannot travel and the Home Office has now nominated a further family. Having regard to the property and age of children, etc. this nomination will be accepted. At the time of writing it is not known what date the family will be travelling.

3. Casework support service

BRC has been directly commissioned to provide the case worker support service. BRC have a clear programme of activities and support going forward and I am receiving positive feedback regarding these activities.

#### 4. Education

The operational group has facilitated close working relationships and is ensuring that the schools and children (and families) are appropriately supported. The families (together with MEAS staff, BRC Support workers and interpreters) visited the respective schools before the end of last term to familiarise themselves with the schools and how to get to school, meet key staff, and make arrangements e.g. school meals. The children have started school on a phased basis although it is noteworthy that some children are already attending fulltime. Colleagues 'pulled out all the stops' to ensure the recruitment and induction of Bilingual teaching assistants who will support the children in their learning experience. Colleagues are very positive and committed to working together to support the new pupils/families.

#### 5. Health

Health is engaged. Families have been assigned to GPs, and appropriate referrals are being made to specialist services, e.g. cardiology. As there are a number of young children, health visitors are also actively engaged.

#### 6. English as a second language (ESOL)

Neath Port Talbot College provide ESOL classes and the necessary arrangements are in the process of being made.

#### 7. DWP

The operational group has facilitated BRC, DWP and the Council's Housing Benefit service working closely. There has been positive feedback on how well the appointments were handled and I am advised that there has been good progress in this regard.

#### 8. Community cohesion/safety

It is imperative that this resettlement programme is handled sensitively. South Wales Police have been very proactive and actively engaged in helping integration. I have been advised that no issues have been reported to the Police.

## 9. Communication Strategy

A communication strategy has been shared with key partners and all partners requested to refer any press interest to the Council's media team.

## 10. Biometric Residency Permits (BRP)

At the time of writing, BRP have all been applied for and residence permits have now been received for each family member

## 11. Phase two of the resettlement programme.

The Council has committed to take a further five families; it is not yet clear how this second phase will be managed or when families are due to arrive.

### **Financial Impact**

The LA is working to this principle that its legitimate cost of achieving the resettlement of these families is covered by the specific grant based on unit costs per person.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The proposals contained in this report will have a positive impact on all those who are eligible for assistance irrespective of their protected characteristics therefore the screening assessment undertaken identified no need for a full equality impact assessment to be carried out.

### **Workforce Impacts**

There are no adverse impacts to the workforce. Though staff are required to manage the increased workload the monitoring of the resettlement programme brings in addition to their normal duties.

### **Legal Impacts**

The Council must ensure that at all times in its implementation of the resettlement programme it complies with the requirements of the Grant Agreement with the Home Office and the subsequent agreement it has entered into with the BRC.

## **Risk Management**

There are risks associated with this programme, in terms of

Reputation: for example if the Authority failed to respond to the request to help in this humanitarian crisis or if services and support were not available to assist families or if the community became concerned.

Finances: if costs exceed grant

Significant service / operational change: whilst there is specific grant there are pressures on staff to manage this workload in addition to their normal duties.

Reputational and financial risks will be managed through the operational and strategic steering groups, via close financial monitoring and partnership/collaborative working.

## **Consultation**

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

## **Appendices**

None

## **List of Background Papers**

None

## **Officer Contact**

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