

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 07/09/21

Title: Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Relocation Scheme

Purpose of the report: To seek approval to offer relocation to an Afghan LES family.

For: Decision

Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member: Cllr, Ellen ap Gwynn. Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance (including Refugee resettlement)

Background

The UK Government wrote to all Locally Authority Leaders and Chief Executives on the 30th July, requesting support to welcome Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) to their home authorities. This group of Afghan nationals have worked for the UK and risked their lives alongside British forces in Afghanistan over the past twenty years, and now require relocating to the UK with their families.

This follows NATO's decision to withdraw military forces from Afghanistan. The scheme acknowledges and reflects that the situation in Afghanistan has changed, and with it the risk to the local staff who have worked for the UK Government. As a result, the UKG are now working at pace to relocate around 3,000 people (or approximately 600 families) before September. Four flights have already arrived, bringing 137 families to the United Kingdom where they are being warmly welcomed.

Due to the speed of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and the capture of Kabul, the urgency of the situation is critical, with the prospect of retribution against Afghan LES extremely likely.

The situation has developed into a humanitarian crisis and Ceredigion County Council is requested to consider contributing to resettling those who have worked for the UKG in Afghanistan, and avoid falling into the hands of the Taliban.

It is likely that further correspondence will be received from the UKG in the period between writing this report and a cabinet decision. In the meantime the Leader has tasked officers to discuss potential arrangements with UKG officials.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why

Currently being undertaken due to urgency of situation

Wellbeing of Future Generations: *Summary:*
Long term:
Collaboration:

Involvement:
Prevention:
Integration:

Recommendation(s): To relocate at least one family under the Afghan LES scheme.

Reasons for decision: To respond to a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as the Taliban have swiftly gained control of the country.

Overview and Scrutiny: Not applicable due to urgency, although it is planned to take a progress report to the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating committee in due course

Policy Framework: Ceredigion refugee resettlement

Corporate Priorities: Enabling individual and Family Resilience

Finance and Procurement implications: The Afghan LES Relocation Scheme is generously supported by the Home Office

Legal Implications: After 5 years residence, refugees can apply for the 'right to remain'

Staffing implications: None. The council already has an officer who undertakes Refugee resettlement tasks as part of her role. We also commission the British Red Cross to assist families with acclimatisation.

Property / asset implications: The council will work with the partners and the public to source accommodation.

Risk(s): Reputational. In addition, a detailed Covid-19 focussed risk assessment will be conducted and implemented'

Statutory Powers: Not applicable. This is voluntary arrangement

Background Papers: Joint letter from three Secretaries of State within the UKG

Appendices: none

Corporate Lead Officer: Alun Williams

Reporting Officer: Alun Williams

Date: 13/08/21



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



Ministry
of Defence



Home Office

To all Council Leaders and Chief Executives in England, Scotland, and Wales

30 July 2021

AFGHAN LES RELOCATION SCHEME ACCELERATION

We last wrote to you on the 3rd June regarding the Government's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), requesting your support to welcome Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) – who have worked for the UK and risked their lives alongside British forces in Afghanistan over the past twenty years, and are now relocating to the UK with their families.

This follows NATO's decision to withdraw military forces from Afghanistan. The ARAP scheme acknowledges and reflects that the situation in Afghanistan has changed, and with it the potential risk to the local staff who have worked for the UK Government. As a result, we are now working at pace to relocate around 3,000 people (or approximately 600 families) before September. There are further LES who will be eligible under the scheme which will remain open. Four flights have already arrived, bringing 137 families to the United Kingdom where they are being warmly welcomed.

Since we wrote to you last, we have been delighted to see many local authorities come forward with generous offers of support for our Afghan friends and their families. We are grateful for this positive response and would like to thank all councils who have provided offers of support and accommodation.

But we write to you now with an urgent request for more offers of support.

The increasing numbers of flights over the summer means that we urgently need more generous offers from local authorities to resettle those who have served our country so bravely in Afghanistan. All offers are appreciated, and we especially require offers of support from areas who can provide or source larger homes of four bedrooms or more, to suit the needs of those Afghan LES arriving in large family groups.

As outlined in our last letter, the Home Office is providing a funding package to resource local authorities who come forward with offers to resettle Afghan LES and their families, enabling delivery of integration support for families and further support on employment, welfare benefits, and access to health, education and other local services. This financial support for all participating local authorities is being enhanced through additional central government integration support, including:

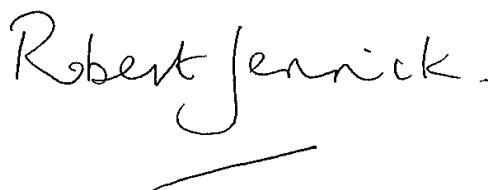
- An online welcome pack and GOV.UK landing page for all LES new arrivals - www.gov.uk/guidance/welcome-a-guide-for-arrivals-to-the-uk-from-afghanistan-on-the-locally-employed-staff-relocation-scheme
- Regular online local engagement networks for participating local authorities, to share information and resources
- Access to central government departments, to share information and work through any emerging policy or other issues that may arise

As part of the process of engaging with local authorities to shape this offer, we have heard the feedback of expert local partners from councils across the UK. As a result, we are pleased to announce that, with HMT support, integration funding has now been extended to 12 months, meaning an increase to £10,500 per person welcomed by a local authority. Furthermore, we can provide additional funding (such as for rent, travel, or other incurred costs) to cover any potential short-term period before access to benefits and services becomes available to the new arrivals.

We are also making extra funding available to local authorities for the provision of English language training for adults. And we have agreed to simplify the payment structure to reduce the administrative burden on local authorities who choose to welcome the new Afghan arrivals. We hope these updates will be useful and may help you to come forward with an offer of support soon.

We will continue to listen to the feedback you provide, and our cross-Government teams will continue to engage with local authorities to answer any questions you may have. We will continue to hold frequent conversations with Strategic Migration Partnerships, and Local Authority Afghan LES Network meetings – regular sessions organised by MHCLG for local authorities from across the whole of the UK, attended by partners from across Government – both to generate new welcome and accommodation offers, but to also support and learn from those places who have agreed to host Afghan LES and their families.

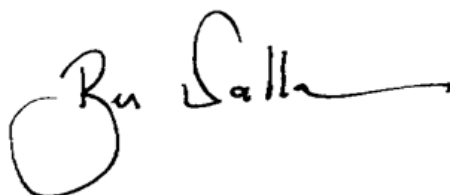
We look forward to hearing from even more local partners from across the UK very soon, with additional offers of support to welcome all those who need our help and assistance.



**RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING,
COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**



**RT HON PRITI PATEL MP
HOME SECRETARY**



**RT HON BEN WALLACE MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE**