

Afghanistan Resettlement Programme – Information Update as of 30 June 2021

From Paula Massey Coordinating Officer re: Afghan Resettlement Programme

I would like to confirm that to date; I have not received any formal communication relating to West Oxfordshire District Council's involvement in the Afghan Resettlement Programme.

Gloucestershire County have been actively working on the programme for around a month now and below you find my recent briefing note for reference.

Please find below an update on the current situation relating to the Home Office request for assistance in the resettlement of British Forces Afghan families and to provide some clarity on our involvement.

Background

The UK has been running a scheme to support locally employed staff (LES) in Afghanistan, often in dangerous and challenging situations, in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013.

Those who qualify and choose to relocate to the UK with their families are not expected to return to Afghanistan. After completing five years limited leave, they can apply for permanent residence in the UK, free of charge, ensuring that they can settle here permanently and continue to build their lives and future here.

People coming to the UK under this scheme may arrive either as a whole family unit or with the lead person arriving first and their dependents joining them at a later point, depending on their individual circumstances.

What this means to Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils

- The Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP) has confirmed that Gloucestershire will offer to take 35 families over the next three months through the scheme. Communicated as a support-only offer, to the Home Office (HO).
- Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS), have confirmed that they are able to deliver the support element: from preparing properties for move-in and collecting at the airports, to providing the wider support during the first 4 months – but need us to help them in identifying the properties to meet the ambition set by Leadership Gloucestershire.
- Each District to identify suitable properties working with Social Housing Providers and Private Sector Landlords (PRS) where they do not hold their own housing stock and liaise accordingly with GARAS.
- Gloucestershire County Council will circulate press release with approval from SHP, asking Landlords for help.

- To incentivise PRS Landlords, the SHP has agreed that the Partnership will guarantee 6-months of rent. 4-months advance via the HO payment, with the Partnership using the Housing Rescue Fund or other COMF funding to make up the shortfall where required.
- Communication to be opened up with MOD facilities in our Districts. If they are unable to offer any accommodation a follow up request will be for voluntary support eg. painting/decorating; moving furniture; driving etc.
- Sufficient funds from the wider Resettlement Scheme are available to manage any wrinkles. Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) as owners of the wider resettlement scheme will nominate a lead to take over the coordination of this going forward. Meanwhile to maintain momentum, coordination is via nominated Officers and GARAS.
- Sue Pangbourne, Executive Director, Service Delivery is our representative at the SHP.
- Paula Massey, Enabling Manager is the nominated coordinating Officer.
- There are no specific decisions or actions needed from districts at this time.