



**LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL**

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER AND OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS

MONDAY, 5 JULY 2021

Please find enclosed Decision Notice in connection with the following:

ICMD4 PARTICIPATION IN THE AFGHAN LOCALLY EMPLOYED STAFF RELOCATION SCHEME (Pages 2 - 11)

Please note that call-in has been waived on this item.

Queries regarding these documents

Please contact Liz Bateson, Democratic Services - email ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk.

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Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

**EXECUTIVE DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER OR DELEGATED OFFICER
NOTICE OF DECISION**

TITLE OF DECISION:	
PARTICIPATION IN THE AFGHAN LOCALLY EMPLOYED STAFF RELOCATION SCHEME	
NAME OF DECISION TAKER:	COUNCILLOR CARY MATTHEWS
POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITY HELD:	CABINET MEMBER WITH PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOUSING
CONTACT OFFICER:	FIONA MACLEOD, HOUSING STANDARDS MANAGER
TELEPHONE:	01524 582649
E-MAIL:	fmacleod@lancaster.gov.uk
Details of Decision:	
That the Council agree to be part of the Government's Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme and aim to relocate up to five families.	
Reasons for the decision:	
Due to changes in the international presence in Afghanistan, the Government plans to immediately accelerate the relocation of locally employed staff and their families who worked for the British Forces from Afghanistan to the UK. Families will be arriving in the UK between July and September 2021. This is in recognition of their service and reflects the risks involved.	
IS THE DECISION URGENT	
YES	
THE HOME OFFICE HAVE ACCELERATED THE RELOCATION OF STAFF TO THE UK TO ENSURE THEIR CONTINUED SAFETY	
I can confirm that this decision is urgent as any delay likely to be caused by the Call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests and therefore is not subject to Call-in. The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been consulted.	
I hereby agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable, in all the circumstances, and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.	
Signed : Kieran Keane Chief Executive	
I confirm that I have taken account of the options proposed by officers, the various implications set out in the report and the comments of the Monitoring and Section 151 Officers and am authorising the decision as set out above.	
SIGNATURE OF DECISION TAKER:	Cllr Cary Matthews
DATE:	5.7.21
<i>THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</i>	
REF NO.	
ICMD4	
DATE DECISION TAKEN:	5.7.21
DATE DECISION PUBLISHED:	5.7.21
IMPLEMENTATION DATE	
IMMEDIATE: CALL-IN WAIVED	

Lancaster City Council | Report Cover Sheet

Meeting	Individual Cabinet Member Decision	Date	24/06/21
Title	Participation in the Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme		
Report of	Director for Communities and the Environment		
Purpose of Report			
All local authorities have been invited to be part of the response to the Government's Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme. This report describes the scheme and requests approval for Lancaster City Council to be involved.			
Key Decision		n/a	
		Exempt	No

Report Summary
Due to changes in the international presence in Afghanistan, the Government plans to immediately accelerate the relocation of locally employed staff and their families who worked for the British Forces from Afghanistan to the UK. Families will be arriving in the UK between July and September 2021. Local authorities have been asked to assist, and will be provided with funding to house and support the families when they first arrive and for a 12 month period.

Recommendations of Councillors
<p>(1) That Lancaster City Council agrees to participate in the Government's Afghan Locally Employed Relocation Scheme.</p> <p>(2) That Lancaster aims to offer relocation to up to five families totalling approximately 25 people.</p>

Relationship to Policy Framework	
Participation in the scheme is consistent with a co-operative kind, and responsible Council.	
Conclusion of Impact Assessment(s) where applicable	
Climate	Wellbeing & Social Value
Digital	Health & Safety
Equality	Community Safety
Participation will result in a positive impact in terms of equality, wellbeing and social value.	
Details of Consultation	
In view of the urgent nature of the scheme, there has not been widespread consultation, but the following have been consulted;	

Lancashire County Council, The Director of Public Health for Lancashire, Morecambe Bay CCG, Global Link

Legal Implications

Legal will be able to advise the Council upon the contents of any grant funding agreement and approve the same. If the Council wishes to use its own housing stock to accommodate the families, it will need to have regard to its housing allocation policy. Legal can assist, if required, in respect of the appropriate form of agreement for the occupation of housing by the families.

Financial Implications

The local authority is provided with funding to support families as outlined in the attached Home Office Fact Sheet for Local Authorities and supplementary email. Payment will be claimed in 3 instalments. It is considered that the rates included within the grant funding arrangement are acceptable to local conditions and therefore no further financial burden on the local authority. The additional staff time required to undertake this scheme can be managed from within existing budgets.

Other Resource or Risk Implications

There are no major resource or risk implications for the Council.

Some Officer time will be required to set up and monitor the integration support over the 12 month period.

Section 151 Officer's Comments

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add

Monitoring Officer's Comments

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

Contact Officer	Fiona Macleod
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Links to Background Papers

Appended to report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Following the drawdown of UK military operations in Afghanistan, the Government introduced schemes to support current and former locally employed staff (LES) who worked for British Forces, often in dangerous and challenging situations. This is in recognition of their service and reflects the work and the risks involved. Due to changes in the international presence in Afghanistan, the Government plans to immediately accelerate the relocation of staff and their families from Afghanistan to the UK.

- 1.2 All Local Authorities have been asked to be part of the scheme and Lancaster would like to participate. It would see four to five families relocate to the Lancaster district. The families will arrive between July and September 2021.
- 1.3 People relocated under the scheme are supported for a 12 month period by the local authority. This will involve an integration package, and financial support until they satisfy the Habitual Residency Test set by the DWP (which can take up to 3 months). Funding is provided to the local authority from the Government to support families for the 12 months through a Grant funding arrangement, including rent, furnishings, living expenses and integration support. There is no financial burden on the local authority.
- 1.4 The Council previously took part in both the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) so has experience in welcoming and supporting refugee families. 15 families in total were resettled between July 2017 and September 2019. Approval has already been given to be part of the Global Resettlement Scheme (GRS) and to accommodate a further 5 families. The GRS was delayed due to Covid and the first families are expected to arrive from September 2021.
- 1.5 Families arriving as part of the SRP and VCRS programmes were accommodated in a combination of Council Housing and Housing Association properties as well as in the private rented sector. It is anticipated that this mix of tenures, subject to availability, will continue.
- 1.6 There are established networks in Lancaster with experience of providing integration support to new arrivals. It is anticipated that these networks will provide integration support to any arrivals for the 12 month period.
- 1.7 The Director of Public Health for Lancashire has been consulted and supports Lancashire's involvement in the scheme. He comments that arrivals will go through all the necessary quarantine processes and family members would need to be engaged with vaccination as soon as they arrive here in the UK/Lancashire.
- 1.8 Those individuals who qualify and chose to relocate to the UK with their families can apply for permanent residence in the UK after 5 years.

2.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

Option 1:
Participate in Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme.
Advantages:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lancaster City Council has a history of welcoming people who have been forced to flee their home.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lancaster is designated as a City of Sanctuary with an aim to provide a welcoming place of safety for people fleeing violence and persecution, building a culture of hospitality and inclusiveness within the city • Support services set up as part of this scheme will benefit other members of the community.
<p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up and monitoring the scheme will require some management time from Council staff
<p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further pressure on the housing stock.
<p>Option 2:</p> <p>Do not participate in the Afghan Locally Employed Relocation Scheme</p>
<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional demands on staff time
<p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient accommodation will be found nationally for individuals and families at risk • Lancaster misses out on additional integration resources being brought into the city as part of the scheme.
<p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational damage with regard to non-participation. • National government may place families without the planning and support available in this scheme.

3.0. Officer Preferred Option

3.1 The officer preferred option is Option 1 – to participate in the Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme and to support its acceleration.



Home Office

FACT SHEET FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Relocation Scheme

May 2021



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to Melanie Johnson at melanie.johnson@homeoffice.gov.uk.

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.

The scheme currently consists of two elements:

- The ex-gratia scheme which will close in November 2022 and;
- The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy which launched in April 2021, reflecting the changing situation in Afghanistan and consequent risk to LES.

Both schemes are intended to support current and former LES who have worked for British Forces and to provide appropriate support that honours their service and properly reflects their work and the risks involved. The schemes provide a range of in-country packages of assistance in Afghanistan and, for those who meet the criteria, relocation to the UK with their dependants.

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.

Local authority support

People who are relocated under the scheme are supported for a four month period by a local authority who will meet the family/individual at the arrival airport and take responsibility for them from arrival.

The local authority is responsible for providing a four month integration package which includes:

- Reception arrangements upon arrival at the airport including handover from flight escorts and welcome briefing
- Accommodation
- A package of advice and assistance covering employment, welfare benefits, housing, health, education and utility supply
- Registration with GPs and local Job Centre Plus including receipt of a National Insurance Number
- Assistance in securing school places for school aged children
- Cash support.

It should be noted that LES are not eligible for benefits until they can satisfy the Habitual Residency Test set by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) which can take up to 3 months, so the local authority provides financial support to those who arrive under the relocation schemes for up to 4 months.

Local authority funding

The local authority is provided with funding to support families as outlined below through a Grant funding arrangement. The local authority claims an initial payment on arrival and a further payment after the 4 month period has ended.

The current rates of support are outlined below:

1. 4 month funding package for Beneficiaires arriving either as a single person or with their family members:

Accommodation			
Set-up and void costs (lump-sum)	Per person rate for families	Per person rate for couples	Per person rate for singles
	£1250	£1425	£2850
Rent (up to 4 months)	£15 per person, per day		
1 night hotel accommodation (if	£50 per person		

needed, dependant on time of arrival)				
Baby pack comprising cot, highchair etc	£225 per any child under two years of age			
Integration				
To provide integration support (lump-sum)	Per person rate for families	Per person rate for couples	Per person rate for singles	
	£4500	£6000	£7500	
Cash support				
Weekly cash support rates (up to 4 months)	Single (under 25)	Single (25 or over)	Couples	Child (under 18)
	£58.90	£74.35	£117.10	37.75
Transport				
Transfer from airport to accommodation	£40 per person			

2. 8 week funding for dependents joining a family member already settled under the scheme:

Accommodation		
Set-up and void costs	Spouse	Per child
	£1,500	£1,500
Rent	Only for large families	
Baby Pack	£225 per child under two years of age	
INTEGRATION		
To provide integration support (lump sum)	Spouse	Per child
	£4,500	£4,500
CASH SUPPORT		
Weekly cash support rates (8 weeks)	Spouse	Per child
	£43.00	£37.75
TRANSPORT		
Transfer from airport to accommodation	£40 per person	