

Decision maker:	Director of Adults and Communities
Decision date:	Friday, 23 November 2018
Title of report:	Enhanced Housing Management for refugees
Report by:	Senior Commissioning Officer (migration and communities)

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To approve the award of contract for a service to deliver enhanced housing management for refugee families during their second and third years of resettlement.

The first cohort (2016/17) of resettled refugees will be coming to the end of their second year of resettlement between November 2018 and June 2019. The second cohort (2018) of families who have arrived between June and September 2018 will come to the end of their initial year of orientation and support between June and September 2019. Families are provided with initial support during year one of resettlement through a contract with Refugee Action. Families from the first cohort are provided with enhanced housing management support during year two of resettlement.

The model to provide 12 months of orientation and support to each cohort is adopted by specialist providers as the approach that achieves the best outcomes for people going through the resettlement process. National guidance, the experience of other councils, case work to date and the exit interviews conducted for the families due to reach the end of the 12 months of support have identified the following ongoing areas of need;

- English language development (purchased via the council's community learning team)
- Support to access employment (provided for by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Building Better Opportunities project)
- Volunteering and training opportunities (offered by community services such as

- Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service)
- Support with managing tenancy and associated factors such as benefit entitlement (commissioned Enhanced Housing Management for refugees service).

The enhanced housing management service considered in this report is designed to provide support to the families to enable them to sustain their tenancies during the second and third year of their resettlement journey. An open tender process has been followed, in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules, to seek a provider to deliver enhanced housing management support for the third year of resettlement for the 2016/17 cohort and second and third year for the 2018 cohort.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) a contract to deliver enhanced housing management for resettled refugees in years two and three of resettlement for three years to September 2021 at a cost of £60,970 be awarded to Spring Housing Association.**

Alternative options

1. Not to award a contract for the provision of enhanced housing management for refugee families. This option is not recommended as the families would be at risk of a breakdown in their tenancy, possibly resulting in homelessness or them leaving the county in order to seek support elsewhere. This scenario is not a desirable outcome for these vulnerable people and would put pressure on local services in having to respond to housing related crises. This also would not comply with the principles of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme or Vulnerable Childrens Resettlement Scheme, where the host council agrees to provide appropriate support to resettle families and receives funding from the Home Office to aid in fulfilling this agreement
2. To make a direct award to the current refugee enhanced housing management provider. This option is not recommended as it would be in breach of the council's contract procedure rules, which require competitive quotes to be sought from a minimum of three appropriately qualified and competent suppliers for a contract value between £5,001 and £75,000.

Key considerations

3. Herefordshire Council initially agreed to participate in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in September 2015 with a pledge to resettle up to 60 individuals in Herefordshire. Further to this initial pledge an additional commitment to resettle up to 35 individuals was made in December 2017. Following a competitive tender process, Refugee Action was appointed as the provider for the orientation and support service in September 2016 and was reappointed in February 2018 to continue this provision. To date 95 people, in 23 households, have been resettled in Herefordshire, arriving in several cohorts between November 2016 and September 2018. All of these households are provided with support from Refugee Action for their first 12 months of resettlement.
4. All families have been resettled in privately rented accommodation in Hereford or the immediate surrounding area. Consideration of family size and any disability related needs

has been taken into consideration when sourcing the housing and placing the families. As part of the 12 months orientation and support service delivered to each cohort of arrivals, Refugee Action sub-contract tenancy support to Spring Housing. During the first year of resettlement, the families are supported in housing related matters, including budgeting. The families who have now exited the initial support by Refugee Action have continued to receive enhanced housing management from Spring Housing during their second year of resettlement following the award of contract in November 2017.

5. The provision of support to families to date during year two has evidenced an ongoing need for enhanced housing management during year two and three of resettlement. Following officer discussions with commissioning leads in other regional local authorities this need is also evident in other resettlement areas'. The impact of the social security benefits cap, introduction of universal credit and associated budgeting pressures all impact on the requirement for additional support to be able to maintain tenancies.
6. An open tender procurement process has been undertaken. Tenders were evaluated against quality and price criteria. Following moderation panel meeting it is proposed that the contract is awarded to Spring Housing Association as the highest scoring (and therefore most economically advantageous) bidder.
7. A detailed service specification outlines the requirements for delivery of enhanced housing management service for the second and third year of resettlement, including contract monitoring requirements.

Community impact

8. Once the families arrive in Herefordshire they become Herefordshire residents, with all the rights and responsibilities of other residents. By supporting them to continue to resettle and maintain their tenancies, the council's corporate plan priorities to enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives and to secure a better quality of life are being met.
9. Seeking a provider to deliver enhanced housing management, aligns with the vision outlined in the health and wellbeing strategy of "Herefordshire residents are resilient; lead fulfilling lives; are emotionally and physically healthy and feel safe and secure".
10. The Home Office's funding instruction for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme requires councils to utilise the monies to support the refugees and further the aims of the programme. The programme aims to provide long term integration support to resettled refugees from Syria and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Each resettled refugee should be supported during their first five years in the UK to adjust to their new life here, to become independent and integrated into their local communities.
11. There are no specific implications for the council's role as a corporate parent in relation to the recommendations of this report.
12. The council is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for all individuals affected by the council's activities. Therefore the council endeavours to ensure that the work it and its partners undertake, does not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of refugees. Council partners are expected to work to the same health and safety standards and codes of practice as the council, as far as is reasonably practicable. The appointed provider will be required to adhere to these standards as the chosen provider for enhanced housing management for refugees.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
15. This decision will benefit those with a protected characteristic through the provision of a service to support their continued integration. For example a Syrian refugee who has a physical disability would have the protected characteristics of race and disability, they would be supported to access appropriate benefits or employment, understand how to manage their tenancy and what their rights as tenants are. Completed Equality Impact Assessment attached as Appendix 2.

Resource implications

16. The following resource implications have been considered;
 - i. As this is fully grant funded it has zero financial impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
 - ii. The cost of the service has been determined by the successful bidders tender submission. The cost for the service is £60,970.
 - iii. This is grant funded and is based on the assumption of 95 people remaining in Herefordshire for the second and third year of their resettlement. Further grant funding is available in years four and five, reducing year on year.

Legal implications

17. The recommendations in the report are in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules of the constitution and comply with the principles of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.

Risk management

18.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The service might not be mobilised by 29 November 2018.	The successful bidder is the current provider, therefore mobilisation of this service does not require any transfer of information or staff and can commence without delay.
Reputational risk to Herefordshire Council if the families are not adequately supported leading to potential destitution and cohesion issues.	In line with the council contract procedure rules bids have been sought from appropriately qualified and competent suppliers to deliver a service that will mitigate the risks of destitution and cohesion issues.
Funding not claimed from the Home Office to cover the cost of the service.	Finance team is informed of anticipated income and expenditure. Annex A claims, evaluation data and any further required evidence are submitted by the Senior Commissioning Officer (migration and communities) in a timely way to ensure that payments are made in accordance with Home Office funding instructions,

19. Risks will be managed at a service level and escalated if required.

Consultees

20. None

Appendices

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix B – Data Privacy Impact Assessment

Background papers

None identified