

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

Decision to be taken by: Mark Preece, Chief Fire Officer, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS)

Pursuant to an Authorisation from: Cllr Dave Norman, Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries (08/10/2020): [Procurement of Refugee Support for the grant funded Home Office Resettlement Scheme](#)

Report title: Exercise the option to extend the council's contract with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) relating to the provision of support services to refugees under the UK Resettlement Scheme.

The decision	To exercise the option to extend the contract with GARAS on the expiry of the initial three-year contract period for one year at its expiry on 31 March 2024. This will ensure continuity of support is provided to refugees resettling in Gloucestershire under the grant funded Home Office UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). There remains an option to extend for a further one year after the expiry of this extension period.
Background documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Officer Decision (24/03/2021): To Award a Contract for Refugee Support for the grant funded Home Office Resettlement Scheme• Individual Cabinet Member Decision report October 2020 and associated documents• UK Resettlement Scheme Funding Instruction 22 -23
Reasons for the decision	<p>This officer executive decision follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The Cabinet Decision in October 2020 which authorised the Council to undertake full market engagement and procure support services for refugees in Gloucestershire arriving under the United Kingdom's Resettlement Scheme, using an EU compliant open tender process, to award a contract up to the value of £3,010,000.2) The subsequent officer executive decision taken on 24 March 2021 to award the above contract to GARAS for a period of 3+1+1 years. <p>The UKRS has enabled ongoing welcome of families into the county and exercising the option to extend the contract by one year from April 2024 will enable continuity of support for those arriving under this scheme.</p>

<p>Resource implications</p>	<p>The budget to fund the above extension is coming from the £20,520 per person tariff over five years allocated from the Overseas Development Aid budget to local authorities. The first £8,520 per individual is available in year 1. The year 2-5 funding is also calculated on a per person tariff and paid to GCC and then managed by GFRS.</p> <p>Funding is broken down as follows: Year 1 tariff - £8,520 Year 2 tariff - £5,000 Year 3 tariff - £3,700 Year 4 tariff - £2,300 Year 5 tariff - £1,000</p> <p>Funds are claimed from the Home Office on a bimonthly basis.</p> <p>To date 383 adults and children have resettled in Gloucestershire through this programme (the Syrian programme and wider UKRS).</p> <p>The proposed cost of the GARAS contract extension is estimated at an approximate value of £400,000.</p>
<p>Who has been consulted?</p>	<p>Consultation about the extension option has been with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member, Cllr Dave Norman • Director of Public Health (with lead for migration) • Finance officer
<p>What were their comments?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement that there is continued need for the support provided by GARAS for the refugees living in Gloucestershire under the UKRS scheme. • Agreement that there are sufficient funds to cover the costs of the one-year extension to the current contract with GARAS. • During the one-year extension period a strategy for future resettlement services in Gloucestershire needs to be developed, including a full review of current contracts and processes. 	
<p>Background/Context</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposal is to exercise the option to extend the current contract with GARAS to support refugees arriving in Gloucestershire under the Home Office UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). 2. In 2015, all six Gloucestershire District Councils signed up to take Syrian Refugees to support the government pledge to expand the existing Syrian Vulnerable Person Scheme (SVPS), to meet the aim of providing placements for up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over a five-year timescale. 3. On 17 June 2019, the government announced the consolidation of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Scheme with other national programmes into the UK Resettlement Scheme. 	

4. Under the SVPS and UKRS schemes, the county has welcomed 383 refugees in total. This is in addition to refugees welcomed under other national schemes such as the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Programme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
5. As part of the county's commitments to take in refugees, resettlement support needs to be responsive to the individual needs of each refugee. Refugees are supported in the following areas:
 - Accommodation - decorating and preparing properties as they become available in line with Home Office requirements
 - Immigration status and related issues, including Biometric Residence Permits and residency.
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Financial stability, including accessing relevant benefits.
 - Childcare and education, including ESOL for adults
 - Skills training and employment
 - Cultural and community integration
6. The council's contract with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) for the provision of a Gloucestershire Refugee Resettlement Programme (the "GRRP contract") was awarded in April 2021 with a total value of £1.328 million. The specification for this contract was designed to support refugees from Syria, but the principles set out in the GRRP specification align with the support required by refugees under the UKRS scheme as follows:
 - Tailor support to individual refugees and families
 - Provide intensive support earlier on in the contract and gradually taper it off as the contract progresses.
 - Seek to build resilience and independence in every intervention and element of service design undertaking a strengths-based approach to support planning.
 - Enhancing the ability of mainstream services to support refugees rather than duplicating services or adding additional pressure.
 - Caseworker support is to be underpinned with support in the locality hubs and services within the localities.
 - Support community development around ongoing services to support the refugees to integrate.
 - Supported by and integrating with the existing Syrian families who are focused on independence and needing only light touch approaches.
7. Since this contract was originally awarded, there have been other national schemes established that have separate funding streams to the UKRS. These include (but are not limited to) the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Programme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This has resulted in additional contractual arrangements with GARAS to support refugees arriving under these schemes.
8. A strategy for future resettlement services in Gloucestershire will be developed over the next year. This will aim to develop a consistent approach towards supporting refugees and asylum seekers across Gloucestershire. The one-year extension option allows time to review the current contracts and processes in place.

Alternative options considered and why they were rejected

The option to stop the current contract with GARAS is not recommended. Alternative options were considered and rejected as follows:

Option 1: Cease the current contract. Rejected

Refusing the one-year extension would mean the existing service from GARAS would continue but with no funding to pay for the additional staff currently in post. There are significant risks to this as GARAS has staff in place offering support to refugees. Their jobs or the support offered would be at risk. GCC receive funding for each refugee to provide support and not doing so would fail to meet the requirements of the Home Office and be a reputational and equalities risk.

Option 2: Initiate an open tender process. Rejected.

If an open tender process was initiated at this stage, there would be a disruption to the current provision of support to refugees settled in county under this scheme. GARAS were selected to provide this service under a competitive and legal tender process. GARAS has experience in delivering refugee resettlement support in Gloucestershire across multiple previous and ongoing programmes and has considerable expertise in this area. It is not expected that there would be any significant benefit from an open tender process at this point given it would take considerably longer to implement a provider and this is time critical issue. However, there is a longer-term plan in place to offer an open tender process and to consolidate existing refugee resettlement programmes into one service. This process will be carried out during the one-year extension.

Risk Analysis

The UKRS is now one of several schemes for refugees arriving in the UK. There is now a risk that inequity in provision between the various schemes exists in Gloucestershire. This extends to the possibility that the additional support for refugees under this scheme and contract could cause dissatisfaction or a perception of unequal treatment amongst other refugees and the organisations that support them, or requests for additional funding for other groups. This situation is monitored through the structures set up to support the refugee scheme including the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership (GSMP). A review of the schemes will take place over the next year to better understand and mitigate these risks.

Equalities considerations

The principal equality issues are set out below:

- Appropriate consideration needs to be given to the needs of refugees arriving who are from protected characteristic groups and any additional support required should be tailored to their needs by GARAS.
- GARAS is a Gloucestershire based organisation and has an excellent understanding of local communities and the challenges they face. This means that it is well placed to support refugees to integrate effectively in their new communities and reduce the chance of entrenching inequalities.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been completed? Yes – see below

Climate Change considerations Not applicable	
Ecological implications	
Has an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) been produced, or will one be undertaken at a later stage? No	
Has any conflict of interest been declared by any Cabinet Member consulted on the decision?	No
If any conflict of interest declared, was a dispensation granted by the Audit and Governance Committee of the Council?	
Does this decision report form or any supporting papers provided contain confidential or exempt information?	No
Does this decision need to be published on the GCC website?	Yes
<p>In coming to this decision I have given due and full regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”) by reference to the law itself and also the relevant Equality Impact Assessment, which was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Act.</p> <p>Having fully considered all available information, I have decided to reject any alternative options and take the recommended decision(s), for the reasons set out in this report.</p> <p>Signed </p> <p>Name Mark Preece</p> <p>Title Chief Fire Officer, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS)</p>	
Date 19 th December 2023	
<p>Contact details for further information:</p> <p>Carole Pittaway carole.pittaway@glosfire.gov.uk</p> <p>Ruth Woolley ruth.woolley@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p>	

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

This document demonstrates how the Council is meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty by setting out the findings of an equality analysis that has been undertaken in relation to a proposed change to assess whether it has a disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic, together with care leavers / care experienced adults, as the Council treats this group like a protected characteristic.

1. Background

Directorate	Community Safety
Service area	GFRS
Title of the proposed change being assessed i.e. the policy, service or other development	To extend the current contract for one year following the initial 3-year contract in line with the conditions set out in the original procurement to provide support services for refugees in Gloucestershire arriving under the United Kingdom's Resettlement Scheme.
Describe the purpose of the proposed change and the intended outcomes	
<p>Extending the current contract with GARAS for a further year will enable the GARAS to continue the programme of support to meet the requirements of the UK Resettlement Scheme offering support services to refugees.</p> <p>Approval for the contract extension with GARAS will provide continuity of support from 1 April 2024 for the refugees arriving in the UK under the UKRS.</p>	
Who is affected by the proposals?	<p>Service users <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Wider community <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Workforce <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other, please specify:</p>

<p>Decision to be taken and decision maker</p>	<p>To extend the current contract with GARAS and allocation of one further year of funding to GARAS for the support of refugees under the UKRS.</p> <p>Mark Preece – Chief Fire Officer, GFRS</p> <p>Cllr Dave Norman – Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries</p>
<p>Person(s) responsible for completing this assessment</p>	<p>Carole Pittaway, People and Transformation Manager, GFRS</p>
<p>Date of this assessment</p>	<p>27 September 2023</p>

2. Information and Data Collection

Summarise how you have collected the information and data required to assess the potential or actual impact of the proposed change on those who share the protected characteristics and care leavers / care experienced adults (e.g. survey of services users, community focus groups, analysing service usage data, engaging with the council's staff networks etc.). The actual information and data that has been collected and analysed should be set out in Appendix 1 (Service Users) and Appendix 2 (GCC staff).

If there are any gaps, include an action in section 4 to fill these. This doesn't mean that you can't complete the equality impact assessment, but you need to follow-up the action and revisit as part of the monitoring and review arrangements set out in section 5.

Stakeholders	Engagement and Consultation	Other Methods / Sources
Service Users / Wider Community	GARAS has a feedback mechanism to get the views of the users and any issues are reported as part of the contract management arrangements.	Information provided by the Home Office on the refugees who arrive in Gloucestershire
Workforce	The current member of staff has been fully consulted on the proposal to extend this contract.	Only one member of staff who manages the contract and will continue in the same role.
Partners	Partners including Health, Social Care and Education have been consulted and engaged on this proposal.	
Other	NA	

3. Equality Assessment

Indicate the impact on each group and explain how you have reached your conclusions (i.e. through analysis of the information and data that was collected through the engagement, consultation and other methods / sources that were set out in section 2).

Service Users					
Groups	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact
Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010)	Age				The extension of support from GARAS will have benefits for all service users. We have considered these characteristics and there is no identified difference in impact across the different groups.
	Disability				
	Sex				
	Race				<p>The support is being offered to all refugees arriving through the UKRS. The scheme is open to all refugees and the Home Office initiates the resettlement process.</p> <p>GARAS support refugees and asylum seekers from all countries of origin. They do not differentiate.</p> <p>Due to the nature of the refugees background, many have suffered or witnessed traumatic events linked to ethnicity and their home country. The service offers resettlement to all refugees regardless of race or country of origin.</p>
	Gender reassignment				We have considered these characteristics and there is no identified difference in impact across the different groups.
	Marriage & civil partnership				

	Pregnancy & maternity					
	Religion and/or belief					
	Sexual orientation					
Additional Groups	Care leavers / care experienced adults					
Groups		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact

Gloucestershire County Council Staff						
Groups		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact
Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010)	Age		X			No identified differences in impact identified.
	Disability		X			
	Sex		X			
	Race		X			
	Gender reassignment		x			

	Marriage & civil partnership		X			
	Pregnancy & maternity		X			
	Religion and/or belief		X			
	Sexual orientation		X			
Additional Groups	Care leavers / care experienced adults		x			
Groups	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact	

4. Action Plan

Set out the key actions that will be undertaken, following the equality assessment in section 3, to further maximise the positive impact or mitigate the negative impact of the proposal on those who share the protected characteristics and care leavers / care experienced adults (any negative consequences should be eliminated, minimised or counter-balanced by other measures):

Identified Potential or Actual Impact	Recommended Action(s)	Owner	Target Completion Date
NA			

5. Monitoring and Review


Public bodies must have regard to the aims of the duty not only when a policy, service or development is being created and decided upon, but also when it is implemented and at regular intervals afterwards. The Equality Duty is a continuing duty.

Lead officer(s):	Carole Pittaway and Ruth Woolley
------------------	----------------------------------

Frequency of the monitoring and review:	This Equalities Impact Assessment Statement is a live document and will be reviewed and updated regularly (at least six monthly or as new information comes to light) during the implementation UK Resettlement Scheme.
How the impact of the policy, service or development will be measured, including the data and information that will be used:	We will continue to monitor the impacts of the UKRS and the support of GARAS on refugees and the wider community and organisations through routine data collection and reporting, as well as through continued engagement with these groups.
Stakeholders who will be involved:	Provider and service users.

6. Approval

Signature of Senior Officer	CPittaway
Name of Senior Officer	Carole Pittaway
Date	19/12/23

Signature of Decision Maker	
Name of Decision Maker	Mark Preece
Date	19/12/23

Appendix 1 – Service User Data and Information

Details of service users affected by the proposed activity

Groups	Service User Data and Information
Age	Under 5 is 11%. 5 – 18 is 35% 19 – 24 is 8% 25 – 65 46% No records of over 65 years old
Disability	No data available
Sex	Male 51% Female 49%
Race	95% Syrian Arab Republic 5% Somalian
Gender reassignment	No data available
Marriage & civil partnership	All partners are married when they arrive
Pregnancy & maternity	This changes from month to month but usually below 5%
Religion and/or belief	High percentage are Muslim and a small minority are Christian
Sexual orientation	No data available

Care leavers / care experienced adults	There are no care leavers in the UKRS
----------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Appendix 2 – Gloucestershire County Council Staff Data and Information

Details of Gloucestershire County Council staff affected by the proposed activity:

Groups	GCC Workforce Data and Information
--------	------------------------------------

Age	NA
Disability	
Sex	
Race	
Gender reassignment	
Marriage & civil partnership	
Pregnancy & maternity	
Religion and/or belief	
Sexual orientation	
Care leavers / care experienced adults	