

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

Decision to be taken by: Siobhan Farmer, Director of Public Health

Pursuant to an Authorisation from the Council's Scheme of Delegation:
GEN 1 - To enter into any contract for works and the supply of goods and services

Report title: Further extend the council's contract with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) relating to the provision of support services to Ukrainian refugees for an additional eleven months until 31 March 2025.

The decision	To approve the allocation of grant funding to extend the council's contract with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) for an additional eleven months from 1 st May 2024 until 31 st March 2025 to ensure ongoing support for Ukrainian refugees.
Background documents	Homes for Ukraine: council guides - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Individual Cabinet Member Decision (19/05/2022): Ukrainian Refugee Support
Reasons for the decision	The decision to extend the council's contract with GARAS for the provision of support services for Ukrainian refugees will enable GARAS to meet the requirements of the council's Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme and the resettlement and support requirements of Ukrainian refugees.
Resource implications	<p>The budget to fund the above extension is coming from the £10,500 per Ukrainian arrival tariff allocated by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to Tier 1 Local Authorities in the form of the HFU Scheme Section 31 Grant (for arrival dates in 2022). For Ukrainians arriving in 2023 and 2024, the tariff is £5,900 for each new arrival.</p> <p>To date the council has welcomed over 1,600 Ukrainians on Homes for Ukraine visa; and as such the council's total income was £15 million, with £11.3 million carried forward into 2024/25. The funding is being used to fulfil the requirements set out in the Homes for Ukraine – guidance for councils including completion of property checks, welcome visits, safeguarding checks, and the provision of support to help the Ukrainians integrate and settle in their new home.</p> <p>The continued modification of the council's contract with GARAS will cover the following:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service: Delivery of support services for Ukrainian refugees (staffing costs and overheads) Cost: £181,500 (based on 11 months of support at the rate of £198,000 per annum) • Service: Additional funding to support families as required. This contributes to translation costs, transport for refugees to meet support workers, venue hire and refreshments for community cohesion events, plus other identified needs. Cost: £24,000 (based on £20 per guest and the current number of HFU Ukrainians in county: 1200 x £20 = £24,000) <p>Total: £205,500</p>
<p>Who has been consulted?</p>	<p>Consultation about the extension option has been with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Stephan Fifield, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery • Nina Philippidis, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Corporate Resources (S151 officer)
<p>What were their comments?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Stephan Fifield, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery has confirmed his support for the decision. • There is agreement that there is continued need for the support provided by GARAS for the Ukrainian refugees living in Gloucestershire on Homes for Ukraine visas. • It has been confirmed that there are sufficient funds to cover the costs of the eleven-month extension to the current contract with GARAS. • During the eleven-month extension period a strategy for future resettlement services in Gloucestershire needs to be developed, including a full review of current contracts and processes. • Nina Philippidis is also supportive however the ongoing approach to future resettlement services following the end of this extended contract will need to be prioritised and developed in time with the revised contract end date. 	

Background/Context

1. The paper provides the background to the decision to extend the current contract with GARAS to support Ukrainian refugees arriving in Gloucestershire on Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme visas.
2. The HFU scheme allows Ukrainian nationals and the family members to be sponsored by individuals who can offer them a home in the UK. The number of Ukrainians who can access this scheme is uncapped and is instead dependent on the number of sponsors who come forward.
3. Due to number of refugees moving to Gloucestershire and the ongoing situation in Ukraine, there continues to be a need for additional resettlement support to help refugees both on arrival and as they begin building their lives in the UK.
4. Resettlement support needs to be responsive to the individual needs of each refugee. Ukrainian refugees are supported in the following areas:
 - Immigration status and related issues, including Biometric Residence Permits and residency.
 - Support in accessing housing, including by preparing for longer-term alternatives to initial hosting arrangements.
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Financial stability, including accessing relevant benefits.
 - Childcare and education, including ESOL for adults
 - Skills training and employment
 - Cultural and community integration
5. The council's contract with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) for the provision of the Gloucestershire Refugee Resettlement Programme (the 'GRRP' contract), now known as the UK Resettlement Scheme ('UKRS') was agreed on 1st April 2021. The specification for this contract was designed to support refugees from Syria, but the principles set out in the GRRP (or UKRS) specification align with the support required by Ukrainian refugees.
6. In response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis and the launch of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the original agreement was amended under a variation agreement with effect from 1st May 2022. The same principles apply to both the services provided under the GRRP/UKRS contract and the modified services described in this report.
7. This Deed of Variation added the additional services related to Homes for Ukraine for a specific initial period of 12 months from 1st May 2022 with an option to extend for a further 12 months expiring on 30th April 2024.
8. It is now proposed to extend the HFU services provided by GARAS for another extension of a further 11 months. Extending for 11 months rather than a full 12 months, will align this contract to be co terminus with the expiry of the initial term in the GARAS contract, expiring on 31st March 2025.
9. A further Variation Agreement to extend the provision of HFU additional services by GARAS without a new procurement procedure is justified as a change in provider would cause significant inconvenience and pose risk to the council and service users. The increase in price for this extension does not exceed 50% of the value of the original contract. The need for modification has been brought about by circumstances that could

not have been foreseen, as the need for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and support was not envisaged to continue beyond 30th April 2024.

10. A strategy for future resettlement services in Gloucestershire will be developed over the next 11 months. This will aim to develop a consistent approach towards supporting refugees and asylum seekers across Gloucestershire. The 11-month addition allows time to review the contracts and processes currently in place.

Alternative options considered and why they were rejected:

Option 1: By discontinuing the provision of support services to Ukrainian refugees under the Council's contract with GARAS, the pre-existing support service for other groups of refugees would continue, but with no funding to pay for the additional staff currently in post to support Ukrainians, the support currently offered would therefore be at risk.

Also, GCC receives funding for each Ukrainian 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: If an open tender process was initiated at this stage in respect of support services for Ukrainian refugees, there would be a disruption to the current provision of support to Ukrainian refugees. The current service provided by GARAS is professional, effective and they are well-respected across the system. Hence extending the current contract between the Council and GARAS for a further eleven months would be prudent from a continuity and service provision perspective.

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 initiated during the extension period.

Risk Analysis

The modification to the Council's contract with GARAS on 1st May 2022, under which the provision of support services to Ukrainian refugees for a term of 1+1 years was added to the services already provided thereunder was permissible under Regulation 72(1)(c). At that time the risk of a procurement challenge to the proposed exercise of the council's extension option was deemed to be negligible. The risk of challenge to the addition of a further eleven months to this existing contract is also very low.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme has necessitated a new model of support for refugees which has not been offered to other refugees who have recently arrived in the UK, for example from Afghanistan. There continues to be a risk that this additional support for Ukrainians 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 HFU scheme including the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership (GSMP).

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

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

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.

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.



Signed

Name Siobhan Farmer

Title Director of Public Health

Date 02.05.24

Contact details for further information:

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Email: ruth.woolley@gloucestershire.gov.uk

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	Public Health and Communities
Service area	Commissioning
Title of the proposed change being assessed i.e. the policy, service or other development	Further extend the council's contract with GARAS relating to the provision of support services to Ukrainian refugees for an additional eleven months until 31 st March 2025.
Describe the purpose of the proposed change and the intended outcomes	
<p>Extending the council's contract with GARAS for the provision of support services for Ukrainian refugees enables GARAS to meet the requirements of the council's Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme and the resettlement and support requirements of Ukrainian refugees.</p> <p>Approving a Variation Agreement to the existing GARAS contract and allocation of a further £181,500 plus £24,000 for the eleven-month extension enables GARAS to continue their support for Ukrainian refugees.</p>	
Who is affected by the proposals?	<p>Service users <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Wider community <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Workforce <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other, please specify:</p>

Decision to be taken and decision maker	A contract variation and allocation of a further eleven-months of funding to GARAS. Siobhan Farmer – Director of Public Health
Person(s) responsible for completing this assessment	Name: Ruth Woolley Tel. no: 01452 426150 Email: ruth.woolley@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Date of this assessment	5 th April 2024

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	<p>The decision is to extend an existing contract and allocate an additional £181,500 plus £24,000 to the GARAS contract offering support to Ukrainian refugees.</p> <p>Ukrainian refugees in Gloucestershire benefit from the support and guidance provided by GARAS and their staff. This has been proven by the positive relationships between GARAS and Ukrainians in the county. As a result of the work of GARAS, we have seen successful resolutions where host/guest relationships have required mediation and ultimately, we have ensured that Ukrainian guests stay with their hosts rather than having to move into temporary accommodation or be put at risk of homelessness.</p>	
Workforce	<p>The Homes for Ukraine team at GCC have been consulted and engaged on this proposal and support continued partnership working with GARAS.</p>	
Partners	<p>Partners including the GCC HFU team, district councils, the police, education, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirst LEP) have been consulted and engaged on this proposal via the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership (GSMP).</p>	

Other	NA	
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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	X				The extension of support from GARAS has benefits for all service users. We have considered these characteristics and there is no identified difference in impact across the different groups.
	Disability	X				
	Sex	X				
	Race	X				The support is being offered to Ukrainians, so there may be challenge from other ethnic groups of refugees. However, GARAS do support all refugees and asylum seekers from all countries of origin. They do not differentiate and the funding will only allow staff to support Ukrainians thus ensuring the ongoing supported offered to other nationalities is not negatively affected.
	Gender reassignment	X				We have considered these characteristics and there is no identified difference in impact across the different groups.
	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

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

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

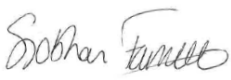
Public bodies must have regard to the aims of the duty not only when a policy, service or development is being created and decided upon, but also when it is implemented and at regular intervals afterwards. The Equality Duty is a continuing duty.

Lead officer(s):	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 continual development of the Homes for Ukraine 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 Homes for Ukraine scheme and the support of GARAS on guests, hosts, 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:	Members of GSMP

6. Approval

Signature of Senior Officer	
Name of Senior Officer	Ruth Woolley
Date	5 th April 2024

Signature of Decision Maker	
Name of Decision Maker	Siobhan Farmer
Date	02.05.24

Appendix 1 – Service User Data and Information

Details of service users affected by the proposed activity:

Groups	Service User Data and Information
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Age	Percentage of Homes for Ukraine guests in Gloucestershire, by age category	
	Age category	%
	<4 years	6.5
	5-11	15.2

	12-17	14.7
	18-25	10.9
	26-30	6.8
	31-40	21.3
	41-50	15.1
	Over 51	9.5
	TOTAL	100
Disability	No data available	
Sex	67% female. 33% male	
Race	Ukrainian	
Gender reassignment	No data available	
Marriage & civil partnership		
Pregnancy & maternity		
Religion and/or belief		
Sexual orientation		
Care leavers / care experienced adults		

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
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Age	N/A
Disability	
Sex	
Race	
Gender reassignment	
Marriage & civil partnership	
Pregnancy & maternity	

Religion and/or belief	
Sexual orientation	
Care leavers / care experienced adults	