



**Open Report on behalf of Glen Garrod,
Executive Director - Adult Care & Community Wellbeing**

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	9 May 2023
Subject:	Resettlement Schemes and Asylum Dispersal in Lincolnshire

Summary:

This report provides a further update on refugee resettlement schemes and asylum dispersal, the national position, and the response by Lincolnshire organisations to national policy decisions. It builds on the briefing paper considered by this Committee on 23 January 2023.

Actions Required:

Members of the Public Protection & Community Scrutiny Committee are invited to review and comment on the contents of this report.

1. Background & Context

This report highlights changes that have occurred since the previous paper was presented in January 2023. This includes an overview of the Home Office proposal to use RAF Scampton to accommodate asylum seekers.

2. Home Office Proposal for RAF Scampton

On 29 March, the Immigration Minister announced proposals to use two surplus military sites in Lincolnshire and Essex and a Residential and Training Establishment in East Sussex to provide basic and functional accommodation for asylum seekers, subject to the sites being legally compliant and ready for use.

The Government have produced factsheets for each of the sites in scope as part of this national infrastructure programme. The Scampton factsheet can be found [here](#). At this point, no detailed plans have been shared beyond this.

West Lindsey District Council is pursuing legal action seeking to prevent the use of the site without planning permission. They, with partners, have secured development proposals for the site which could be jeopardised by its use by the Home Office.

The Home Office have asked the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) to convene and chair a weekly Multi-Agency Forum (MAF). Home Office officials have said the site must be safe, legal, and compliant before it can be used. This strategic group of chief officers is seeking to assure themselves that all identified risks have been considered and mitigated appropriately by the Home Office and its contractors before the site is mobilised. The MAF will be underpinned by six thematic sub-groups led by the Home Office, to consider infrastructure & operations, health services, children's services, finance, site security / policing and communications. Local agencies have identified appropriate officers to attend to check and challenge arrangements as these develop.

The three Council Leaders have requested a meeting with the Immigration Minister to seek government's response to actions expected of the Home Office to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the local community, those accommodated and working on site. They are also seeking recognition that a major national infrastructure project requires significant resource commitment, should it go ahead.

Lincolnshire partners are also pressing the Home Office to produce a formal Assurance Framework to be used as the project develops. Concurrently, Lincolnshire partners are developing a multi-agency risk register to capture all organisational risks and mitigations (if applicable) as they are identified.

As with all refugee resettlement and asylum dispersal workstreams, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) officers are working with Lincolnshire partners to understand the Home Office proposals, and their potential impact on our communities and services. In addition, Lincolnshire senior officers and members are working closely with colleagues in Essex, East Sussex, and North Yorkshire, and collectively with the Local Government Association, to share information.

3 Lincolnshire Resettlement Overview by Scheme / Cohort

3.1 Afghan Resettlement (ARAP/ACRS)

Since the last report, a further two-family groups have been resettled under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in Lincolnshire.

Nationally some 8,000 Afghan refugees are still living in Home Office bridging hotels including one in South Kesteven. On 28 March 2023 the government announced plans to increase support to help Afghan individuals and families to access settled accommodation and end the use of hotels. The Home Office will write to individuals and families setting out when their access to hotel accommodation will end and the support available to enter settled accommodation. Those in hotels will be provided with at least three months' notice through a staggered notification process. If an offer of accommodation is made and is turned down, another will not be forthcoming. The government expects families to find their own accommodation in this circumstance.

Government plans to provide £35 million of new funding to enable local housing authorities to increase support for Afghan households to secure settled accommodation.

Government plan to provide further detailed information about how the funding will be delivered via updated funding instructions in the coming weeks. All further information will be considered by the Lincolnshire Resettlement Partnership chaired by North Kesteven District Council.

Government have also announced that future Afghan arrivals will go directly into suitable accommodation (as opposed to hotels) and further detail is awaited on plans for supporting those yet to arrive at suitable accommodation in the UK.

3.2 Homes for Ukraine Resettlement Scheme

Updates on Lincolnshire's Homes for Ukraine (HfU) Scheme were provided in November 2022 and January 2023. At the time of writing this report, 1,255 Ukrainian guests have arrived in Lincolnshire. Of these, we are currently aware of 966 guests still living in Lincolnshire approximately a third of whom are children. Of these, 697 are living with hosts and 269 are either living independently, temporarily abroad or in emergency temporary accommodation. LCC is not informed if guests move into independent accommodation in Lincolnshire from elsewhere so the actual number of HfU guests in Lincolnshire is likely to be higher than this.

The week of 20 February saw many events across Lincolnshire marking the first anniversary of the Russian invasion including Lincolnshire hosts and guests featuring on Songs of Praise, ITV Calendar and Look North. A co-ordinated local media campaign expressed solidarity with Ukraine and reminded residents of how to express an interest in becoming a host.

We continue to call hosts at the four month point in their hosting arrangement to pre-empt any problems at the six-month point. We are still finding more than 80% of hosts are willing to continue beyond six months. We will shortly be contacting all guest groups living with Lincolnshire hosts who have reached their 12-month arrival anniversary in the UK to proactively check that they are accessing the support available if required.

The host / guest newsletter continues to be emailed out fortnightly, containing useful links and advice. Connect to Support Lincolnshire remains the digital information hub that is updated regularly with important information that will assist guests and their hosts with adjusting to life in the UK. Information can be found [here](#).

Lincolnshire has received a small number of unaccompanied minors on the HfU scheme. These are under 18-year-olds who apply to come to the UK without their parent or legal guardian. Additional safeguarding procedures are in place with assessments undertaken by Children's Services before any placement is approved, and guests are routinely visited after arrival.

As the conflict in Ukraine continues, Ukrainian refugees may decide to stay in the UK longer than they originally anticipated. We continue to listen to feedback from guests and their hosts, community groups and voluntary sector organisations supporting

communities and adapt our support / response where required whilst remaining in line with government guidance.

4 Full Asylum Dispersal

Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation in the East Midlands continues to be sourced and managed by Serco on behalf of the Home Office. As well as procuring hotels, Serco continue to seek properties to lease from a wide network of landlords, investors, and agents.

The East Midlands full dispersal model, developed by East Midlands Councils currently sees Lincolnshire expect to receive approx. 525 individuals by December 23 (NB instead of and not in addition to those already housed in hotels in the county). The various regional models are considered as 'live' by the Home Office so could be subject to review and change. Lincolnshire's numbers may require review if a large site is mobilised at RAF Scampton due to the additional pressures placed upon local services. At the time of writing this report, Serco have yet to secure any dispersed accommodation in Lincolnshire.

As part of the Immigration Minister's parliamentary announcement on 29 March 2023, government confirmed the current £3,500 provided to local housing authorities for new and occupied dispersal beds and announced a new pilot to offer local authorities an additional one-off payment of up to £3,000 for new dispersal beds which are brought on and occupied quickly. To support the rapid provision of accommodation, on Thursday 30 March 2023, the government laid a statutory instrument that, subject to agreement of Parliament, will temporarily exempt asylum accommodation from House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing requirements. The exemption will apply to properties which begin use as asylum accommodation until the 30 June 2024 and last for a two-year period.

5 Asylum Contingency Accommodation (Hotels)

The position remains largely the same as before, except that one of the 'spot booked' hotels in East Lindsey has been decommissioned by Serco. At the time of writing this report, in Lincolnshire there are currently:

- 4 hotels in East Lindsey housing single, adult males; 1 of these on a very temporary basis known as 'spot booking'.
- 1 hotel in South Kesteven housing women, children, and family groups.
- 1 hotel in Boston Borough housing single, adult males.

The total number of service users housed fluctuates but the total maximum occupancy is approximately 470 individuals.

Again, as part of the Immigration Minister's parliamentary announcement on 29 March 2023, government announced a one-off £750 payment to local housing authorities for each asylum seeker in Home Office accommodation on 1 April 2023. The payment will be made during quarter 1 of 2023/24. Lincolnshire councils will consider how this funding is

used given the different services and providers supporting individuals residing in the hotels.

6 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Referrals to LCC's Children's Services for age assessments have accelerated due to the asylum contingency hotels in the county resulting in 13 children (an increase of 8 since the last report) coming into care from around 153 age assessments undertaken (an increase of 68 since the last report) since April 2022. Age assessments continue to take significant amounts of social worker time for which no additional funding is provided.

As at 17 April 2023, 65 young people were in the care of LCC under UASC responsibilities, with 108 UASC 18-25 year old care leavers also supported.

7. Conclusion

Refuge and asylum policy continues to be determined at national and indeed international level with new situations arising at short-notice. The Home Office proposals in relation to RAF Scampton and other large-scale sites in East Sussex and Essex are a very recent demonstration of this. Lincolnshire agencies continue to work together through robust governance and operational arrangements in place to respond to national policy requirements as these emerge.

8. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

A Resettlement risk register is being maintained by the Resettlement Partnership.

Lincolnshire partners are also developing a multi-agency risk register to capture all organisational risks and mitigations (if applicable) as they are identified in relation to the government proposals to utilise the RAF Scampton site.

Lincolnshire partners are also pressing the Home Office to produce a formal Assurance Framework to be used as their national infrastructure project develops.

9. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

This report was written by Samantha Neal, Assistant Director, Prevention & Early Intervention, who can be contacted by e-mail at Samantha.Neal@lincolnshire.gov.uk and Lauren Grosvenor, Resettlement Programme Manager, who can be contacted by email at Lauren.Grosvenor@lincolnshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank