

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Update report

July 2017

The UK operates a number of refugee resettlement programmes including the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS), Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) and the Gateway Protection Programme. These programmes are delivered in partnership with international partners such as the UNHCR and International Organisation for Migration and people are considered on an individual basis following a vulnerability assessment and other considerations including security vetting. As a Local Housing Authority, Swale has committed to supporting The SVPRS.

Following the dismantling on the Calais camp last year some unaccompanied asylum seeking children were transferred to the UK under the Dubs amendment (section 67 of the Immigration Act) following an assessment and provided they met the criteria, including if they were present in Europe prior to 24th March 2016 when the EU agreed a deal with Turkey. For the avoidance of doubt the resettlement schemes do not operate in Calais and Dunkirk. In the case of the Syrian refugee resettlement schemes these operate from the neighbouring countries to Syria i.e. Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey. Any pledge to increase Swale's commitment to Syrian families on the SVPRS programme would have no impact on the Calais and Dunkirk situation.

As part of our commitment to ten families through the SPVRS, we have now housed two Syrian families. We are continuously searching for affordable properties within Swale to meet our commitment, however this search is difficult as can be evidenced by the number of Swale families who are in temporary accommodation as there is a shortage of affordable rental accommodation within Swale. We are in ongoing discussions with landlords concerning appropriate properties that may become available and would urge any landlord with such a property to contact us urgently.

As a two-tier non-metropolitan Council area, there are certain duties to children and adults seeking asylum in the UK which are the responsibility of different tiers of government. Kent County Council, the upper-tier authority has a duty of care towards any unaccompanied asylum-seeking minor aged 17 or under who presents in the county, under the Children Act 1989. As of July 4th 2017, the overall county of Kent is looking after and housing 412 unaccompanied minors who have sought or are continuing to seek Refugee status from the Home Office. In addition, the county continues to give support to 771, 18+ young people leaving care, who have been granted or are seeking leave to remain. At present, just under 40 asylum-seeking/ asylum-sought children and young adults supported by Kent County Council live in in the Swale area. This is partially due to the availability of shared occupancy housing, and the numbers of Kent County Council foster carers in the Swale area. Kent as a county was at one point supporting so many children and young adults (well over 1000), the county struggled to provide enough homes and social workers. As such in 2016, the National Transfer Scheme put in law, the process for other Local Authorities across England to provide a permanent home and take over care responsibility for children who enter Kent via the

Port of Dover.

Residents who would like to be assessed to support a child or young person, and help them find a secure and stable home, are asked to apply via <http://www.kentfostering.co.uk/> or 03000 420 002. Residents who have a two - four bedroom house that might be suitable for young adults or a family to share, are encouraged to approach Swale Borough Council directly. If residents specify they would like to be able to support Care Leaving young people, Swale Borough Council will pass resident's details to Kent County Council for consideration.

Amber Christou – July 2017