



<b>Full Council</b>	<b>Tuesday, 11 July 2023</b>	<b>Matter for Information</b>
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**Report Title:** **Homelessness / Asylum Seekers / Afghan Resettlement Scheme Update (July 2023)**

**Report Author(s):** **Chris Eyre (Housing Manager)**

<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To inform Members on the current position in respect of homelessness, and the management of the asylum seeker, Afghan and Ukraine relocation schemes.
<b>Report Summary:</b>	To provide an update on the Council's position in respect of Homelessness, Asylum seeker and resettlement schemes
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	<b>That the content of the report be noted.</b>
<b>Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):</b>	<p>Philippa Fisher (Strategic Director) (0116) 257 2677 <a href="mailto:Philippa.Fisher@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">Philippa.Fisher@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of Built Environment) (0116) 257 2645 <a href="mailto:Adrian.Thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">Adrian.Thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Chris Eyre (Housing Manager) (0116) 257 2726 <a href="mailto:Chris.Eyre@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">Chris.Eyre@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Louise Taylor (Housing Options Manager) (0116) 257 2735 <a href="mailto:Louise.Taylor@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">Louise.Taylor@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Strategic Objectives:</b>	Our Communities (SO2)
<b>Vision and Values:</b>	Customer & Community Focused (V1)
<b>Report Implications:-</b>	
Legal:	There are no implications directly arising from this report.
Financial:	There are no implications directly arising from this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Decreasing Financial Resources / Increasing Financial Pressures (CR1) Reputation Damage (CR4) Effective Utilisation of Assets / Buildings (CR5) Regulatory Governance (CR6)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report. EA not applicable.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.

<b>Statutory Officers' Comments:-</b>	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
<b>Consultees:</b>	None.
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None.
<b>Appendices:</b>	None.

## **1. Homelessness**

- 1.1 The Housing Options Team processed an average 21 homelessness applications per month during 2022/23. This number of applicants have been managed through the following routes:
- Prevention Duty (86 applicants) – If an applicant is threatened with homelessness within 56 days they will be owed the prevention duty. During the prevention duty period the Council will take reasonable steps to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless, regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection.
  - Relief Duty (101 applicants) - If an applicant has not been prevented from becoming homeless under the prevention duty, they will be owed a relief duty. During the relief duty the Council must take reasonable steps to help an applicant secure suitable accommodation. The relief duty lasts for up to 56 days and is available to all households who are homeless and eligible, regardless of whether they have a priority need.
  - Main Homelessness Duty (64 applicants) – If the Council accept the main homelessness duty to an applicant, it must secure that suitable settled accommodation becomes available to the applicant, providing suitable temporary accommodation in the interim. In most cases the main homelessness duty is discharged via an offer of social housing. However, under the Localism Act (2011) the Council can discharge it's duty via a fixed-term assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector (PRS) with a minimum term of 12 months.
- 1.2 Of the 64 applicants that we have accepted a main homelessness duty to in 2022-23:
- 24 households have accepted a social housing tenancy
  - 2 households have accepted a private rented sector tenancy
  - 1 household lost their temporary accommodation through their own actions, thus bringing the Council's duty to an end
- 1.3 At year end 42 households who the Council owe a main homelessness duty to were carried forward into 2023-24. This included 37 households from 2022-23 and 5 households from 2021-22.
- 1.4 Of the 42 households who are owed a main homelessness duty:
- 12 family households are in temporary accommodation
  - 9 single/couple households are in temporary accommodation.

1.5 The remaining 21 households have made their own accommodation arrangements, including staying with friends and family, some cases will already be in suitable temporary accommodation before approaching, this could include refuge or supported accommodation.

1.6 The Housing Options Manager meets with each Housing Options Officer every 8 weeks and carries out a review of the officer’s caseload covering the following:

- Ensure customers are bidding and encourages customer to bid
- Have the customers been pursuing options in the PRS and in different areas
- Check customer has current Housing Benefit (HB) claim
- Discuss customer personal charges
- Ensure cases are being progressed as they should be
- Any changes in circumstances

1.7 Considerations

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Care Leavers Protocol
- Prison Leavers Protocol
- Asylum Seekers dispersal scheme
- Relocation schemes (Ukraine Afghan)
- Renters’ Reform Bill - Damp and Condensation (property conditions in PRS)
- Social Housing Regulation Bill
- Cost of Living crisis (Including interest rate rise)

1.8 The number of households that approached the Housing Options Team for advice and assistance increased in the last year from an average of 13 approaches per month in 2021-22 to 22 per month in 2022-23. It is not anticipated that there will be a reduction this year in the monthly number of approaches.

1.9 The PRS is no longer seen as a viable option for the Council to discharge it’s homelessness duty. Average rents in the PRS are significantly higher than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for Leicestershire allows for. The table below provides an indication of the average rent in the private sector against the amount a person can make a claim for in housing costs.

<b>LHA rate PRS rents June 2023</b>	<b>LHA</b>	<b>Wigston PRS</b>	<b>Oadby PRS</b>
Shared Accommodation Rate:	£312	N/A	N/A
One Bedroom Rate:	£414	£650	£688
Two Bedrooms Rate:	£520	£795	£900
Three Bedrooms Rate:	£621	£1,100	£1,198
Four Bedrooms Rate:	£824	£1,500	£1,400

Source : PRS information [www.home.co.uk](http://www.home.co.uk)

1.10 **Response**

1.11 In 2022-23 the Housing Options Team advertised 101 properties as available to let, 66 from the Council’s housing stock and 35 owned by Housing Associations.

1.12 The Housing Options Team has also supported several applicants into the PRS by providing repayable deposit loans.

1.13 In 2022-23 where the provision of temporary accommodation has been allocated to a household, the cost of this provision is sought. At the end of the year 98% of the cost of temporary accommodation has been recovered, recovering £315k of £322k spent. This is an

improvement on the previous year performance in which only 71%. (£188k recovered of £266k spent) was recovered.

- 1.14 The Council receives a Government grant for the purpose of providing support towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by the Council in discharging their homelessness duties under homelessness legislation.
- 1.15 The grant award for 2023-24 is confirmed to be £143,683. This represents a 2.95% increase on the grant awarded in 2022-23 (£139,559).
- 1.16 Further grants and awards may be made during the course of the year for different initiatives taken by the Council, for example Rough Sleeper Initiatives or Cold Weather payments.

## **2 Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme**

- 2.1 The Home Office (HO) has announced that they wish to implement a fairer asylum seeker scheme in which all local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales will be expected to participate in a new system of full dispersal to allow the HO to move from placing people in hotels to less expensive and more suitable dispersed accommodation.
- 2.2 Kennedy House, in South Wigston, which has been accommodating asylum seekers since 2016, accommodates 54 single people at any one time. Once a person receives a positive decision from the home office, the Council is notified of this and the Housing Options Team will contact an individual inviting them for an interview with the team.
- 2.3 In 2022-23 a total number of 8 people from Kennedy House approached the Council for Advice and assistance due to having received their determination decision. Of this number, 2 people were provided with temporary accommodation. Following investigations none of the 8 were owed a main duty.
- 2.4 Prior to 2022 the Council did not receive any additional funding for supporting asylum seekers. However, in 2022 the Council received an unexpected 'windfall' of £13,500, which equated to £250 per asylum seeker accommodated in the Borough, at Kennedy House.
- 2.5 Further the Council has received an Asylum Dispersal Grant of £39,000 in June 2023. The Council is free to determine how best to utilise the Funding but for monitoring and evaluation purposes must be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the eligibility conditions in supporting Asylum Seeker Dispersal.
- 2.6 The Council has been pro-active partner in working with East Midlands Migration Partnership, the Home Office and Serco, the Government's chosen contractor supporting asylum seekers.
- 2.7 Serco, has registered their interest in securing 4 PRS properties in the borough in which to house asylum seekers. To date they have not progressed further beyond notifying the Council of their interest.

## **3. Resettlement Schemes (Ukraine/Afghan)**

- 3.1 Afghan Citizens - There are 2 Schemes connected to supporting Afghan citizens being:
  - Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) - is for Afghan citizens who worked for or with the UK Government in Afghanistan in exposed or meaningful roles and

may include an offer of relocation to the UK for those deemed eligible by the Ministry of Defence and who are deemed suitable for relocation by the Home Office

- Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) - those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBTQ+)

3.2 The Afghan families receive full support from our colleagues at Charnwood BC who we have commissioned to act on our behalf, in providing moving and settling in support. This is funded through grant allocated for Afghan Family resettlement from the government.

3.3 The Council has committed to finding accommodation within its housing stock for two families, and to support an additional three families in finding accommodation in the PRS.

3.4 The Council procured two properties at Bennett Way which have been used to meet the commitment to accommodate two families in properties contained within the housing stock.

3.5 In March 2023 the Council requested a pause in its commitment to support Afghan families in the PRS, this was due to lack of affordable properties in the PRS and the increasing pressures on the local housing market.

3.5 In May 2023 the Government put approximately 8,000 Afghan families on 3 month notice that they intend to end their stay in bridging accommodation (Hotels). During the notice to quit period:

- families should make their own accommodation arrangements
- or consent to a referral to a local authority as agreed in the regional homelessness referral plans
- Possibility that Local Authorities will be allocated families to house or may receive homeless applications regardless of pledges

The Council have received three enquiries, in the last month, from Afghan Families wishing to relocate to the Borough.

3.6 New funding arrangements for supporting Afghan families have been announced by the Government and it is likely any initial costs of supporting Afghan families will be met through the new funding streams.

3.7 Homes for Ukraine - There are 19 sponsor households in the Borough that are accommodating families from the Ukraine. The Council's role is confined to conducting property inspections prior to a family moving into a home. Ukraine families are allowed to apply to the housing register and to seek assistance if they are threatened with becoming homeless. To date no Ukraine nationals have applied to the Council as homeless and we have received 1 application from a Ukraine family to join the housing register.

#### **4. Resourcing**

4.1 The current demand created by all the above service requirements is being managed within the existing Housing Options team structure and budgets. In the 2023/24 budget setting an historic issue was corrected to charge the costs of these service to general fund. This position will be monitored as demand increases.