

Executive Summary

Conclusions from the evaluation project

- Overall, the SVPRS run by Powys County Council is viewed as a success by delivery partners, community groups and the Syrian families themselves.
- All the Syrian families reported feeling safe in their homes and neighbourhoods and felt they had progressed in learning English and gaining independence since arriving.
- Delivery partners rated the project's effectiveness and success highly, commending its partnership-based approach and the strength of relationships (formal and informal) between different bodies.
- Community groups (third sector) felt that communication was a weakness in delivery of the project and one they feel still needs to be addressed.
- Syrian families felt English language provision was inadequate, citing a range of criticisms. The general response was that they wanted to progress faster and further than the current range of ESOL classes allowed. It is understood that Powys County Council has expanded the range of ESOL classes available. Further monitoring is recommended to ensure the provided ESOL classes are appropriate.
- EYST Support Workers in Newtown are highly valued by the Syrian families, who overall reported feeling more settled and more content than those in Ystradgynlais. There were mixed views towards the EYST Support Workers in Ystradgynlais with a breakdown in relationship in some cases.
- Long term planning for the integration and development of the families by EYST and the council is unclear. There are 3-monthly family support plans in use by EYST support workers, but no individualised plans, and families themselves have only a vague idea of their long-term goals.
- There was strong support from delivery partners and community partners for expanding resettlement schemes with Welshpool and Llandrindod Wells identified as potential towns for this.

Recommendations

- Powys County Council should investigate the range of Welsh migrant groups and refugee coalitions with a view to representation at meetings.
- Steps should be taken to ensure the "multi agency planning group" are kept apprised, as relevant, to the Syrian families' long-term integration and resettlement goals. This should include subsequent progress towards goals and identifying further support needs. This could involve an EYST representative attending the meetings with a view to sharing

this information, or truncated summaries of milestones being circulated amongst delivery partners prior to meetings. This would “close the feedback loop” as one delivery partner identified.

- Support plans should be co-produced with individuals, agreed with them, and they should be provided with copies. These should include short-term initial support and long-term plans to manage expectations and support families to achieve their own outcomes.
- To address challenges in co-ordinating with community groups it is recommended that Powys County Council facilitate the establishment of a refugee charity or charity coalition in Ystradgynlais and Newtown. Alternatively, Powys County Council could encourage existing Powys refugee charities to take up a wider remit. While EYST and PAVO are currently being used, the former has no specific presence in Powys other than support workers and both have no specialised expertise with refugees. A refugee charity, either focused on the relevant towns, or taking up Powys as a whole, can begin co-ordinating resources and most importantly, consolidating the knowledge and skills necessary to support resettlement projects. Newtown “Community Connections” has begun the process for Newtown. It is recognised that there are limitations and barriers to establishing such a charity, and it relies on volunteer time and motivation. If funding is available, a start-up grant for establishing a charity(ies) or supporting expanding the remit of existing refugee charities to deliver in Powys should be offered.
- Some strategic consideration and assessment of workforce opportunities in Ystradgynlais and Newtown is required, including whether the families may need to move to seek employment in the future. Given some families have expressed a desire to establish their own business or become self-employed, identifying resources for this should be considered.
- Powys County Council is considering recruiting for a Migration Co-ordinator post, should the scheme be extended within the county. This is commendable and addresses many of the improvement points within this evaluation. In particular, we recommend the migration officer take responsibility for co-ordinating the following:
 - o Compiling contact information and co-ordinating communication between volunteer groups, the support workers and delivery partners in towns with families being resettled.
 - o PAVO and the community groups also desired greater clarity from the local authority on what the third sector should or could manage and where they would like contributions. This would help ensure that contributions are not counter-productive. A full-time migration officer will be well placed to carry this out.

Health

- Training tailored to supporting diverse communities, specifically including refugees and asylum seekers, is necessary for front-line staff in healthcare, especially around language barriers.
- Raising mental health at a Multi-Agency Group meeting to assess and pursue a course of action is recommended.

ESOL

- The feedback received from Syrian families is currently being addressed by Powys County Council through expansion of ESOL provision.
- Monitoring ESOL provision, including appropriate levels and pace of courses offered, will provide an opportunity to further tailor English classes to the needs of the families.
- There are no recorded objectives long-term for the Syrian families to learn English, in what time scale, and how this competency will be reflected in their own life goals. Given the centrality of the language to long-term residence and integration, developing a mutually agreed schema for learning the language seems important and also provides a means for the families and delivery partners to assess whether progress is going well or needs further development.

Training

- Training was strongly felt to be inadequate by community groups in Newtown and Ystradgynlais. The knowledge desired by these groups is largely around the practicalities of refugee support. A refugee charity developing/delivering the training syllabus will ensure a more relevant content. EYST could also look at developing their existing training based on the feedback from community groups and delivery partners.
- Training offered by the International Organisation for Migration was suggested as a suitable alternative by PAVO, based on their experience of the course as organised by Michael Smith (Regional Community Cohesion Co-ordinator).
- Delivering training on refugees and resettlement for members of the multi-agency task group would help consolidate and extend competency and preparedness of partners. In addition, opportunities to develop communication between staff members with experience of refugee resettlement and those who might encounter it as part of their roles now or in the future should be explored.

Transport

- Consideration should be given to covering transport costs for resettled families, if possible.
- Empowering and supporting families to use public transport is a partial solution and should be part of the SVPRS and any future scheme in all locations.

If the project is expanded to new geographic locations or to include new groups of refugees or asylum seekers recommendations include:

- Recruiting support workers as early as possible and familiarising them with existing or new Multi-Agency Planning Groups for the relevant areas quickly.
- EYST and Powys County Council in collaboration with existing support workers should develop a clear sense of the knowledge and skill base needed from support workers for potential future recruitment. This would capture the experience and lessons learned on the ground by existing support workers.
- Sharing good practice and lessons learned. Future resettlement schemes should include a period of handover between relevant parties to ensure lessons learned can be communicated and anticipated challenges can be collaboratively planned for with the benefit of experienced insight.
- Arranging a meeting between relevant delivery partners, community groups and PAVO as early as possible after an area has been selected for resettlement. This meeting should include providing an overview of the scope and means by which community groups can contribute, sharing good practice from Newtown and Ystradgynlais and documentation from EYST (such as their “handbook” on resettlement.) This will ensure experience from previous resettlement projects can be passed on. If possible, a “lead” local charity should be identified to co-ordinate community group involvement and contribute directly to project development and management.