

Impact Assessment

1. Proposal Information

Author name	Megan Lewis, Resettlement Project Officer
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Proposal title	Asylum Seekers Resettlement
Description of proposal	<p>Powys County Council is being asked to support The Home Office in accommodating asylum seekers across Powys. The Home Office's specialist contractor, Clearsprings Ready Homes, would be leading and managing delivery of the project. The Council's involvement would be limited to consultation on potential areas for housing, liaison during the settlement (including community cohesion) and, possibly, a duty to assist potentially homeless individuals/families following the determination of their claim.</p>

2. Savings and Consultation requirements

Profile of savings delivery

No savings profile

Consultation requirements

Consultation required? No

Justification Not applicable. Accommodating asylum seekers in Powys is something that the Council is offering to do in response to a request for assistance from the Home Office. The Home Office have indicated that assistance would be mandated should insufficient offers of accommodation be forthcoming. Whilst there will be no public 'consultation' PCC are preparing a communications campaign to ensure that the wider Powys communities are aware of the proposals.

3. Impact on other service areas, geographical areas and data protection

3a. Impact on other service areas

- Childrens Services
- Adult Services
- Housing and Community Development
- Legal & Democratic Services
- other

3b. Impact on geographical locations

The entire county

3c. Data protection impact assessment

Will the proposal involve processing the personal details of individuals? Yes

Is Powys County Council the data controller? No

Further information The Home Office's official contractor, Clearsprings Ready Homes, will be the data controller with PCC only having access to very basic information, limited to name, address, dates of birth and family composition.

4. Impact on Vision 2025

4a. The economy

This project provides an opportunity for private landlords to establish settled tenancies across the county, thus improving their letting businesses.

Impact Should asylum seekers, with a positive outcome, decide to stay in the county, they would be able to work and contribute to the local and wider

economy, their presence would help to balance an ageing demographic across Powys and they would likely bring much needed skills and expertise to the workforce.

Impact
rating

GOOD

Support would be provided, if needed, to boost English language skills, and also assist able individuals back into work.

Mitigation

General integration support would be provided to help individuals and families to settle into their local communities, make good social connections and hopefully settle permanently.

Mitigated
impact
rating

VGOOD

4b. Health and care

Impact

Asylum seekers who receive a positive outcome may wish to remain in the county; In this instance they would require accommodation and may need assistance securing this. Prior to this they will reside in accommodation sourced by the Home Office's agent, Clearsprings Ready Homes. Integration support will be provided for the duration of their stay, facilitating access to all necessary service including GP's, dentist, education and any other required services. Move on services are provided once asylum seekers are required to leave their accommodation to prevent homelessness once asylum claims are determined.

Impact
rating

UNKNOWN

Mitigation

A range of integration and support services would be accessed or put in place to support potentially homeless individuals and families to ensure they are able to secure suitable accommodation and prevent homelessness. Asylum seekers will be consulted on the services they receive to ensure their voices are heard. IT equipment can be provided if needed via third sector and voluntary agencies to ensure digital connectivity. Multi-agency meetings will ensure key stakeholders are able to contribute to the success of the project.

Mitigated
impact
rating

NEUTRAL

4c. Learning and skills

Impact	Asylum seekers, with successful or failed claims, are at risk of poverty if they cannot work, and this may include children.
Impact rating	POOR
Mitigation	A range of support services will be made available to families to ensure they are able to access relevant benefits, have support with English language classes and also to access employment. This will lessen the chances of families falling into poverty.
Mitigated impact rating	NEUTRAL

4d. Residents and communities

Impact	There is a risk of a negative response to new families/individuals being settled from outside the county/UK; Experiences in West Wales (Penally Camp being used to house asylum seekers with a lack of local consultation) show the need for good community cohesion support and a positive communications strategy to avoid any vacuum/negative media/press. As settled families will be living initially on benefits, lack of income could lead to individuals/families not having access to digital services and thus missing out on essential services and support.
Impact rating	VPOOR
Mitigation	Work is already underway to develop a positive narrative across the county in respect of asylum and resettlement; Powys' Communications team are working on a bespoke PR campaign to set a positive tone for resettlement in Powys; We will ensure the public are aware of the proposed resettlement by the issuing of appropriate press releases and using social media to put out positive messages relating to resettlement. Community Cohesion teams are part of the working group and are able to offer advice and examples of best practice for Powys to follow in respect of local engagement with residents and key stakeholders (eg. Police, youth services, third sector groups, voluntary groups).
Mitigated impact rating	NEUTRAL

4e. Evidence

Service standards and KPIs from Clearsprings Ready Homes

Advice received from Community Cohesion team.

Bespoke PR/Communications plan produced by PCC

Limiting numbers to be settled in any one location so that it is proportionate to the local area.

Learn from best practice in other parts of Wales/UK.

5. Impact on well-being goals including Welsh language and equalities

5a. A prosperous Wales

Impact	New skills and younger people will be brought into the community who might, following determination of their asylum claims, decide to settle and contribute to the local economy.
Impact rating	GOOD
Mitigation	Full integration and employment support, together with English classes, will be provided in order to increase the chances of skilled individuals and families remaining in the county to make a positive contribution.
Mitigated impact rating	VGOOD

5b. A resilient Wales

Impact	None
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5c. A healthier Wales

Impact	Offering refuge/sanctuary to asylum seekers will provide them with a safe home and a period of stability which should have a positive impact upon their mental health and physical health. Key partners (PTHB) have been advised of potential resettlement of individuals with possibly enhanced mental health or physical health needs, albeit in small numbers.
Impact	

rating UNKNOWN

Mitigation Ensuring adequate liaison with key health partners, and adequate integration support for asylum seekers should mitigate any negative impacts upon the general health of the county.

Mitigated impact rating NEUTRAL

5d. A Wales of cohesive communities

Impact There is a risk of a negative reaction to settlement of asylum seekers into local communities due to perceived 'difference', fear, lack of resources.

Impact rating UNKNOWN

Mitigating steps include:-

Mitigation

- Early engagement with the Community Cohesion team across Powys
- Learning best practice from other settlement experiences (eg. Penally)
- Putting in place a bespoke communications/PR strategy to set 'the tone' and avoid 'vacuums' which can be filled by the far right.
- Establishing mechanisms for local community discussions /engagement.

Mitigated impact rating NEUTRAL

5e. A globally responsible Wales

Impact Offering sanctuary to asylum seekers will assist the global need for settlement places for the increasing numbers of displaced people across the world. This support will be of benefit to all sectors of society regardless of status. This proposal will have a direct and positive impact in respect of human rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Impact rating GOOD

Mitigation Additional integration support and support to move back into employment will be provided to families and individuals, further enhancing their life chances and protecting them from harm and poverty.

Mitigated VGOOD
impact
rating

5f. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Using Welsh

Impact It is possible some families and individuals may chose to settle in Wales and learn the Welsh language.

Impact rating UNKNOWN

Mitigation Not specified

Promoting Welsh

Impact Welsh language lessons will be made available to newly settled individuals and families.

Impact rating NEUTRAL

Mitigation Not specified

Sports, Art & Recreation

Impact Opportunities and support to integrate locally will increase the likelihood that some individuals may take part in or even excel in sporting activity or artistic endeavours.

Impact rating NEUTRAL

Mitigation Not specified

5g. A more equal Wales

Age

Impact None

Disability

Impact None

Gender Reassignment

Impact None

Marriage or Civil Partnership

Impact None

Race

Impact None

Religion or Belief

Impact None

Sex

Impact None

Sexual Orientation

Impact None

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact None

Socio-economic Duty

Impact None

5h. Evidence

Project would be largely neutral or no impact.

6. Impact on key guiding principles & workforce

6a. Sustainable development principles

Long-term

Impact None

Collaboration

Impact This is a multi agency project. It will involve the individuals being assisted with accommodation, Clearsprings Ready Homes (The Government's agent), Powys County Council and possibly local third sector organisations and volunteer support groups. Clearsprings lead on the programme but will rely upon partnership working with key stakeholders as above.

Impact rating NEUTRAL

Powys CC will actively engage with Clearsprings Readyhomes and other key partners such as Police, support agencies, third sector

Mitigation

partners and the asylum seekers being accommodated to ensure needs are met, communities kept advised and community cohesion maintained.

Mitigated
impact
rating GOOD

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Mitigated
impact
rating GOOD

Prevention

The key issue is identified as a possible threat to community cohesion; ie. a possible 'right wing' response to any asylum resettlement as occurred at Penally Barracks in West Wales. In this case the right wing groups had a high and very negative physical and social media presence which was highly damaging to the cause and promoted much false information and negative press.

Impact As Penally demonstrated, negative press and an unwelcoming atmosphere can easily be caused where the right take control of the narrative around resettlement. It is inevitable that those being resettled will feel unwelcome at best, and even physically threatened. Steps need to be taken to minimise this type of response and it's negative affect upon the mental health of those being accommodated.

Safeguarding; Adults and children may be vulnerable due to culture shock, language limitations or other physical or mental health conditions. Steps will need to be taken to ensure adequate safeguarding for all.

Impact

rating VPOOR

Mitigating action includes:-

- Ensuring accommodation is for much smaller numbers across a range of communities in Wales/Powys.
- Clearsprings will lead on community engagement and liaison with the Police to understand the dynamics of possible host communities, and the potential for anti-social behaviour or xenophobic reaction from the community, as far as this is possible.
- PCC will lead on a PR campaign setting the context for resettlement and sharing positive stories of resettlement already across Powys to ensure local communities are kept informed and see and hear positive reactions to resettlement.
- PCC Communications team will also keep a close eye on local press/social media reaction and address any negative responses in a robust manner, in line with 'Hate Crime' legislation.

Mitigation

Safeguarding

- Individuals/families being resettled will receive support from The Refugee Council via a phone line, and will have a dedicated 'Housing Officer' provided by Clearsprings Ready Homes who will visit every property a minimum of fortnightly.
- Powys' Resettlement Project Officer will liaise with Clearsprings Ready Homes and local voluntary and third sector support agencies to ensure additional community support on an informal level, to complement the formal support package.
- Social Services will be kept updated about the location of households in case safeguarding issues are raised directly with them.

Mitigated
impact
rating

NEUTRAL

Integration

Impact

Those individuals and families being resettled will come from a different cultural background and have to adjust to a new way of life. They will also need to access mainstream services such as health, education and welfare benefits. This project depends upon accessing appropriate services in these sectors to ensure asylum seekers are fully supported. There could be tensions due to scarce resources including access to housing, health and education which could, potentially, be reflected in community cohesion issues.

Impact
rating

POOR

PCC will ensure key stakeholders are fully informed about the location and extent of settlement. Settlement will be in small numbers across the County to mitigate any negative impact upon supporting

Mitigation services. Individuals and families will be supported to access relevant services and support, including language support. A PR campaign will serve to inform the local community and set a positive tone for resettlement. Key stakeholders will be invited to be part of a regular multi-agency forum to discuss any challenges and to share best practice for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

Mitigated impact rating GOOD

6b. Impact on the workforce

Impact None

6c. Impact on payroll

Impact None

6d. Welsh language impact on staff

Impact None

6e. Impact on apprenticeships

Impact None

6f. Evidence

Written statement from Clearsprings outlining their approach to asylum resettlement.

PR campaign and plan for monitoring media from PCC.

Feedback and comment from stakeholders via the multi-agency forum

Feedback from community cohesion teams regarding community activity

Regular feedback from asylum seekers via Clearsprings consultation

7. Likelihood and risks

Risk 0.0

Description Risk of negative PR for supporting asylum seeker accommodation

Likelihood score	4	Impact score	3	Risk rating	12.0
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Mitigation PCC to develop a PR campaign to inform the public of plans to support asylum seeker accommodation. Settlement will be in small numbers spread across the County proportionate to local communities. Community Cohesion teams engaged/advising on process.

Residual likelihood score	3	Residual impact score	2	Residual risk rating	6.0
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Risk 1.0

Description Risk of being mandated to provide asylum seeker accommodation by Home Office if no 'offer' of accommodation voluntarily made by PCC.

Likelihood score	4	Impact score	2	Risk rating	8.0
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Mitigation Work with Clearsprings to identify suitable accommodation proportionate to local communities and affordable to the target group.

Residual likelihood score	2	Residual impact score	2	Residual risk rating	4.0
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Risk 2.0

Description Risk of unrest in communities and a negative response to asylum seeker resettlement.

Likelihood score	3	Impact score	3	Risk rating	9.0
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Mitigation Work closely with Clearsprings, Community Cohesion teams and PCC Comms team to ensure adequate community engagement and provision of honest and open communications. Respond immediately and robustly to negative comment and press.

Residual likelihood score	3	Residual impact score	2	Residual risk rating	6.0
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Risk 4.0

Description Risk of harm or serious harm to individuals or families being accommodated across Powys, either due to poor mental health, or by hostility within the community.

Likelihood score	3	Impact score	4	Risk rating	12.0
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Mitigation Police checks on properties, liaison with Council and Community Cohesion teams. Maximise support via formal and informal sources to ensure any mental health issues are identified and addressed. CRH ensure regular contact with those accommodated.

Residual likelihood score	3	Residual impact score	3	Residual risk rating	9.0
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Risk 5.0

Description Risk of increased homelessness should asylum claims fail, leaving applicants without accommodation or recourse to public funds and not permitted to work. Evidence suggests a high percentage of those whose applications fail quickly migrate to larger cities

Likelihood score	3	Impact score	2	Risk rating	6.0
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Liaison with CRH in advance of application outcomes, and at the time of determination.

Limit numbers being accommodated and spread throughout the County.

Mitigation

Liaise with support agencies to ensure support network exists for applicants.

Residual likelihood score	3	Residual impact score	2	Residual risk rating	6.0
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Risk 3.0

Description Risk of increased homelessness should asylum claims fail, leaving applicants without accommodation or recourse to public funds and not permitted to work. Evidence suggests a high percentage of those whose applications fail quickly migrate to larger cities

Likelihood score	3	Impact score	2	Risk rating	6.0
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Liaison with CRH in advance of application outcomes, and at the time of determination, for forward planning.

Limit numbers being accommodated and spread throughout the County.

Mitigation

Liaise with support agencies to ensure support network exists for applicants.

Residual likelihood score	3	Residual impact score	2	Residual risk rating	6.0
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8. Overall summary and judgement

Outline assessment

Powys County Council will be required to assist with accommodating asylum seekers in the near future. The arrangement proposed is that Clearsprings Ready Homes (CRH), the Government's agent, will take the lead in property procurement, management and integration support. This means that the Council's involvement will be minimal, but the potential impact upon communities and the Council's reputation could be significant if not managed closely. The plan to engage with the local Community Cohesion team, and also to develop a bespoke PR/Communications campaign, should help to mitigate any negative outcomes. The Council will work very closely with CRH who will also be responsible for community engagement and community cohesion.

This impact assessment considers the wider impact of accommodating asylum seekers in Powys. Whilst there are risks identified, there is also potential for this to be a positive experience for Powys, bringing in younger families, new skills and enhancing cultural diversity across the county. Appropriate planning will ensure:-

- Good advance PR/Comms for the wider Powys community
- Good support networks/services for asylum seeking families, both during and after their claims are determined
- Regular liaison with Community Cohesion teams who can guide, advise and offer best practice from elsewhere
- Wider distribution of asylum seeker accommodation in small numbers, proportionate to local communities

If the Government feels it is necessary, there will be a mandate for all Local Authorities to accept asylum seekers as current dispersal areas are now at or over capacity. It is felt the best course of action is to be proactive in working with the Government agent (CRH) to secure a small number of properties in the first instance, whilst working to mitigate the inherent risks.

Cabinet reference:

9. Additional evidence

Once this draft is finalised additional evidence could include:

Written agreement with CRH clarifying lines of responsibility.

Sight of CRH key policies and procedures in relation to asylum seeker support

Written overview from Community Cohesion team summarising any areas of concern in Powys

Brief report on key lessons learned by other Local Authorities in the accommodation of asylum seekers

Demographic data for Powys illustrating the ageing demographic and skills shortages

Presentation of the Council's PR strategy

10. Ongoing monitoring arrangements and governance

Monitoring arrangements

CRH will convene a multi-agency group to meet at least quarterly to monitor progress and share any issues of concern.

The multi-agency group will include Council departments, Police, Community Cohesion and Community Safety Partnerships.

CRH are responsible for monitoring wellbeing and safety of those accommodated across Powys via telephone support and personal visits at least fortnightly.

PCC Communications team will continuously monitor social media and press activity for issues of concern.

Review date: 31/08/2022

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