

Sevenoaks District Council
Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) Policy

V1: 150517

1. This policy sets out how Sevenoaks District Council acting in their capacity as the local Housing Authority will support the resettlement of refugee families within the Sevenoaks District, as part of the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.
2. When making a decision under this Policy the Council will have regard to:
 - a. South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) Statement of Outcomes (at pages 2-3);
 - b. Syrian VPRS Memorandum of Understanding (at page 4-8);
 - c. Sevenoaks District Council Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Flowchart Summary (page at 9).
3. Any identified properties, which may be suitable for refugee families as part of the Kent SVPRS, will be inspected and considered by this Council for suitability and other local needs. Only properties that are unable to meet a local need will be considered for use under the SVPRS. An assessment of affordability will be made by Sevenoaks District Council against Local Housing Allowance rates when considering the suitability of properties.
4. Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, following consultation with local Members, has delegated powers to offer properties to the Home Office.
5. In line with the Memorandum of Understanding (pages 4-8), we will form a Sevenoaks District Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Steering Group which will include appropriate representatives from Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council.
6. The Steering Group will ensure compliance with the SESPM Statement of Outcomes (at pages 2-3) and co-ordinate support and communication across Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council when involved in:
 - a. Decision making on accepting cases
 - b. Pre-arrival planning
 - c. Financial planning
 - d. Post arrival support
 - e. Ongoing support
 - f. Planning for years 2-5 and exit

South East Strategic Partnership for Migration – Statement of Outcomes

1. Section 1 – Delivery Outcomes

1.1 The SRP is made up of two elements:

1.1.1 **Pre arrival** – Provision of medical and travel services enabling the migration of accepted Beneficiaries to the UK; and

1.1.2 **Post arrival** – Housing provision, initial reception arrangements, casework and orientation support including English language provision.

1.2 This Statement of Outcomes describes the **post arrival outcomes** to be achieved.

2. Post Arrival Outcomes

Provision of accommodation:

2.1 The Recipient will arrange accommodation for the arriving Beneficiaries which meets local authority standards and which will be available on their arrival and is affordable and sustainable.

2.2 The Recipient will ensure that the accommodation is furnished appropriately. The furniture package should not include luxury items. This means that funding received through this Instruction should be used for food storage, cooking and washing facilities but should not include the provision of other white goods or brown goods, i.e. TV's, DVD players or any other electrical entertainment appliances. This shall not preclude the Recipient from providing Beneficiaries with additional luxury, white or brown goods through other sources of funding.

2.2.1 The Recipient will ensure that the Beneficiaries are registered with utility companies and ensure that arrangements for payments are put in place (no pre pay/card accounts).

2.2.2 The Recipient will provide briefings on the accommodation and health and safety issues for all new arrivals including the provision of an emergency contact point.

Initial Reception Arrangements:

2.3 The Recipient will meet and greet arriving Beneficiaries from the relevant airport and escort them to their properties, briefing them on how to use the amenities.

2.4 The Recipient will ensure that Beneficiaries are provided with a welcome pack of groceries on their arrival – the content of this pack should take into account the culture and nationality of the Beneficiary(ies).

2.5 The Recipient will provide an initial cash allowance for each Beneficiary of £200 – this is to ensure they have sufficient funds to live on while their claim for benefits is being processed.

Casework Support:

2.6 The Recipient should ensure that Beneficiaries are provided with a dedicated source of advice and support to assist with registering for mainstream benefits and services, and signposting to other advice and information giving agencies – this support includes:

2.6.1 Assisting with registration for and collection of Biometric Residence Permits following arrival

2.6.2 Registering with local schools, English language and literacy classes

- 2.6.3 Attending local Job Centre Plus appointments for benefit assessments
- 2.6.4 Registering with a local GP
- 2.6.5 Advice around and referral to appropriate mental health services and to specialist services for victims of torture as appropriate
- 2.6.6 Providing assistance with access to employment.
- 2.7 The Recipient shall develop an overarching (or framework) support plan and bespoke support plans for each family or individual for the first 12 month period of their support to facilitate their orientation into their new home/area.
- 2.8 The Recipient shall undertake an assessment with each Beneficiary of their English language capability to determine appropriate support arrangements through provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or equivalent. The purpose of the language tuition is to ensure that each Beneficiary is able to carry out basic transactions within the communities in which they have been placed. Beneficiaries should be able to access such classes within one month of their arrival and they should be made available until such time as suitable mainstream provision becomes available or until 12 months after arrival (whichever is sooner).
- 2.9 Any language support provision should be delivered by an accredited provider.
- 2.10 Throughout the period of resettlement support the Recipient will ensure interpreting services are available.
- 2.11 The above outcomes will be provided through a combination of office based appointments, drop in sessions, outreach surgeries and home visits.
- 2.12 The Recipient shall collate such casework information as is agreed to enable the Authority to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Programme's delivery.

Requirements for Beneficiaries with special needs/assessed community care needs:

- 2.13 Where Beneficiaries are identified as potentially having special needs/community care needs the Authority will ensure, as far as possible that these needs are clearly identified and communicated to the Recipient six (6) weeks prior to the arrival of the Beneficiaries.
- 2.14 Where special needs/community care needs are identified only after arrival in the UK, the Recipient will use its best endeavours to ensure that care is provided by the appropriate mainstream services as quickly as possible.
- 2.15 Where sensitive issues (including safeguarding issues or incidents of domestic abuse, violence or criminality) are identified pre-arrival by the Authority, the Authority will notify the Recipient immediately, and not longer than 24 hours, after its receipt of the information.
- 2.16 Where sensitive issues such as the above are identified post-arrival by the Recipient, the Recipient shall notify the Authority within 24 hours, setting out what procedures are to be put in place to mitigate the situation.

SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RELOCATION SCHEME**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN**

- (1) Kent County Council, whose principal office is at County Hall, Sessions House, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ AND
- (2) Sevenoaks District Council, whose principal office is at Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

1. Purpose of the Memorandum

To set out clearly the basis on which the two local authorities will work together to deliver the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in the Sevenoaks area.

2. Background

As part of its response to the current situation in Syria, the Government set up the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in February 2014. This scheme involves taking particularly vulnerable refugees straight from the Middle East and resettling them in the UK. The refugees are given five years Humanitarian Leave to Remain and as such are able to work and claim benefits and other public funds from day one.

On 7 September 2015 the Government announced that the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme will be expanded so that 20,000 people will be assisted under the scheme by the end of the Parliament in 2020. The scheme is currently voluntary and dependent on local authorities agreeing to take part.

The scheme is based on need. Working closely with the UNHCR, it prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin, including:

- women and girls at risk
- survivors of violence and/or torture
- refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs
- refugees with medical needs or disabilities
- children and adolescents at risk
- persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity

Individuals accepted onto the scheme are able to bring their immediate family with them. Once cases have been assessed and referred from the UNHCR, the Home Office checks that the individual meets the eligibility criteria, carries out medical and thorough security checks and arranges the necessary visas. The cases are then passed to a local authority that has agreed to participate in the scheme. The referral will include details on family make up, age and specific needs, including a full medical health assessment report. If accepted the local authority (both district and county in two-tier areas) will need to arrange housing, school places and any additional support that is required. An arrival date is agreed with the Home Office.

3. Responsible Authority

In two-tier areas it is the Housing Authority that is treated as the responsible authority by the Government. Any delegation of functions and/or funding to Kent County Council (KCC) has to be with the agreement of the relevant Housing Authority.

4. Kent Response

Following a meeting of Kent Leaders on 23 September 2015 and Kent County Council on 22 October 2015 it was agreed that KCC would work with district Housing Leads (through the Kent Housing Group) to determine the best way to set up the scheme in Kent.

Several meetings have been held with district housing leads and other key partners and it has been agreed that KCC should co-ordinate and commission a service in partnership with those districts that wish to take part. This memorandum sets out the basis on which the County Council will work together with Sevenoaks District Council. There will be a separate Memorandum of Understanding for each area of Kent that wishes to take part.

5. Governance Arrangements

A local District Steering Group will be set up to cover arrangements for families to be resettled in Sevenoaks. This will include representatives of:

- Sevenoaks District Council (where the refugees will be settled);
- Kent County Council Commissioning;
- Kent County Council Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance;

The District Steering Group will hold regular planning meetings before and after arrival bringing in other partners as needed, including the resettlement support provider. The District Steering Group will be responsible for ensuring that all activities pre and post arrival are carried out, although many of these will be delegated to the resettlement support provider, various functions within KCC and other partners including Health.

The steering group can meet in person or via teleconference as appropriate. Meetings must always include at least one representative of Sevenoaks District Council and KCC.

It will be the responsibility of individual partners to update their own senior management and elected Members.

6. Information Sharing

Parties to this agreement must sign up to the Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement.

Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council will be Joint Data Controllers (as defined in the Data Protection Act) for the purposes of information governance. The support provider will also be classed as a Joint Data Controller as they will receive and disseminate information to Sevenoaks District Council and KCC. This means that the following information will be treated as belonging equally to both parties to this agreement and the relevant support provider:

- Referral details provided by the Home Office/UNHCR;
- Advice and service arrangements made by various partners (e.g. Education, Social Care, Jobcentre Plus etc);
- Information gathered by the support provider in the process of their work with the family. This includes Integration Support Plans and updates on progress in specific areas.

The families will have signed a consent form for information to be shared by the UNHCR and Home Office before they arrive. This gives authority for the initial sharing of

information with other bodies, including the support provider, Health, Jobcentre Plus etc. Once arrived they will be:

- Provided with a document (Privacy Notice) explaining who now holds their information and what will be done with it.
- Asked to sign a consent form for the continuation of sharing of specific information more widely to named organisations (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, schools, colleges etc). The consent will apply to all the Joint Data Controllers.
- The consent form will include a reference to the fact that information will be shared with the British Government about how a family's resettlement is progressing, when requested. This will cover the routine monitoring carried out by Government. However if a more detailed report is required on an individual family, additional specific consent will be required.

7. Security of Personal Data

Both the Sevenoaks District Council and KCC have responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1998 and it is essential that all staff are trained in this regard and understand their responsibilities to ensure personal and organisational compliance in this area. Sevenoaks District Council and KCC have exchanged copies of appropriate information handling policies and both parties are satisfied that there are appropriate policies in place for handling and processing of personal data and Information Security, including the handling of information security breaches.

Data Protection training is in place at both the Sevenoaks District Council and KCC and regularly rolled out to all staff.

In the event of a security breach involving beneficiary information originating from the Home Office/UNHCR it must be reported to the Home Office immediately (within the first 24 hours of becoming aware), in the first instance through Strategic Regional Leads and notifying the Home Office's Corporate Unit at: HOSecurityenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

The Home Office will provide direction on the appropriate steps to take about the best approach in terms of containment of the breach and any requirements to report the breach to the Information Commissioner's Office. Each bodies Senior Information Risk Owner can decide to report a breach by their own body (while simultaneously discussing this with the other body and the Home Office). If one body's SIRO becomes aware of a breach by the other body, they should raise it with the other body straightaway, but will reserve the right to report the breach to the Home Office even if the other body's SIRO decides not to.

8. Funding for the scheme

Funding from the Home Office for local authorities is as follows:

Year one

Adults:	£8,520
Children 5-18:	£8,520 plus £4,500 for education
Children 3-4:	£8,520 plus £2,250 for education
Children under 3:	£8,520

This funding is ring-fenced to the scheme.

It is important to note that the above figures do not include the Housing Benefit and other DWP benefits (which will be paid in the usual way) or the health care costs (which will be paid direct to the CCGs - £2,600 per person).

Extra payments may be available for education for refugees under the age of 18. There will also be a Special Cases Fund to provide extra support for the most vulnerable refugees.

Years two to five

Year 2 - £5,000 per person.

Year 3 - £3,700 per person.

Year 4 - £2,300 per person.

Year 5 - £1,000 per person.

There will also be support for education and health in years 2-5, which will be funded separately to the local authority tariff.

The funding is to be drawn down in stages from the Home Office, following submission of forms stating what has been spent to date.

Sevenoaks District Council agrees to inform the Home Office that the funding will be sent to Kent County Council in the first instance and that KCC will be the official budget holder for the scheme. This has to be done annually. The funding will then be distributed as follows:

- Payments to providers including the resettlement support provider, bodies providing furniture, interpreting services, transport provider etc.
- Sevenoaks District Council for any expenses they have incurred.
- Specified amounts to KCC Education to then pass on in full to schools.
- Other ad hoc expenses as they occur.

The above arrangement, whereby KCC administers the funding, can be reviewed if either party to this agreement is not satisfied with the way it is working.

9. Identification and management of properties used for the scheme

It will be the responsibility of Sevenoaks District Council to find, inspect and secure suitable properties for the scheme. They should also ensure that landlords/agents have brought the properties up to a habitable standard, that the properties are clean, any necessary repairs have been carried out and they are ready to be furnished and set up by KCC (see next section).

If the rent is above Housing Benefit (LHA) rates, it may be possible in exceptional circumstances for the Home Office Syrian VPRS funding to be used to cover any shortfall for a period. However, using the SVPRS funding for this purpose must be mutually agreed by Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council.

Any necessary and reasonable costs needed to secure the property will be reimbursed out of the funding for the scheme. This includes:

- Void costs before the family arrive or after they leave if necessary
- Deposits (if it is not possible to use the Housing Authority's Rent Deposit Scheme)
- Rent in advance – if required by the landlord before Housing Benefit is paid

Any deposit, rent in advance paid must be returned at the end of the tenancy to whichever body has paid it (whether that is KCC or Sevenoaks District Council).

10. Furnishing and setting up of the property prior to the arrival of the family

It will be the responsibility of KCC to arrange for the furnishing of the property and to ensure that all essential items are in place before the family arrives. They will also deal with any appropriate requests for additional items. Funding for this will come from the money available through the Syrian VPRS and claimed as part of the process set out in section 8.

11. Pre-arrival liaison with the Home Office and South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) and coordination of pre-arrival arrangements

KCC will be responsible for the liaison with Sevenoaks District Council, the Home Office, SESPM and relevant partners such as Health and Education over which families can be accepted under the scheme.

KCC will also oversee the process whereby the relevant services and support have been put in place before/shortly after the families arrive. This includes, but is not limited to, Health, Education, ESOL provision, Benefits, Adult Social care, Children's Services etc. The majority of this will be carried out via the commissioned support providers (Centra).

12. Resettlement support provision

The two local authorities (Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council) will agree which body will be appointed to carry out the provision of intensive resettlement support for the first year (from the KCC list of providers approved for use on the scheme or another body or section of the two councils if this is felt to more appropriate). Once this has been decided any commissioning arrangements will then be the responsibility of KCC Commissioned Services.

13. Monitoring and review

KCC Commissioned Services will be responsible for regularly reviewing the operation of the chosen support provider and dealing with any day to day issues that arise in the course of the provider's work with the family. They will make available to the rest of the District Steering Group (i.e. KCC SPRACA and Sevenoaks District Council) the Integration Support Plan and further regular up-dates on the progress of the family.

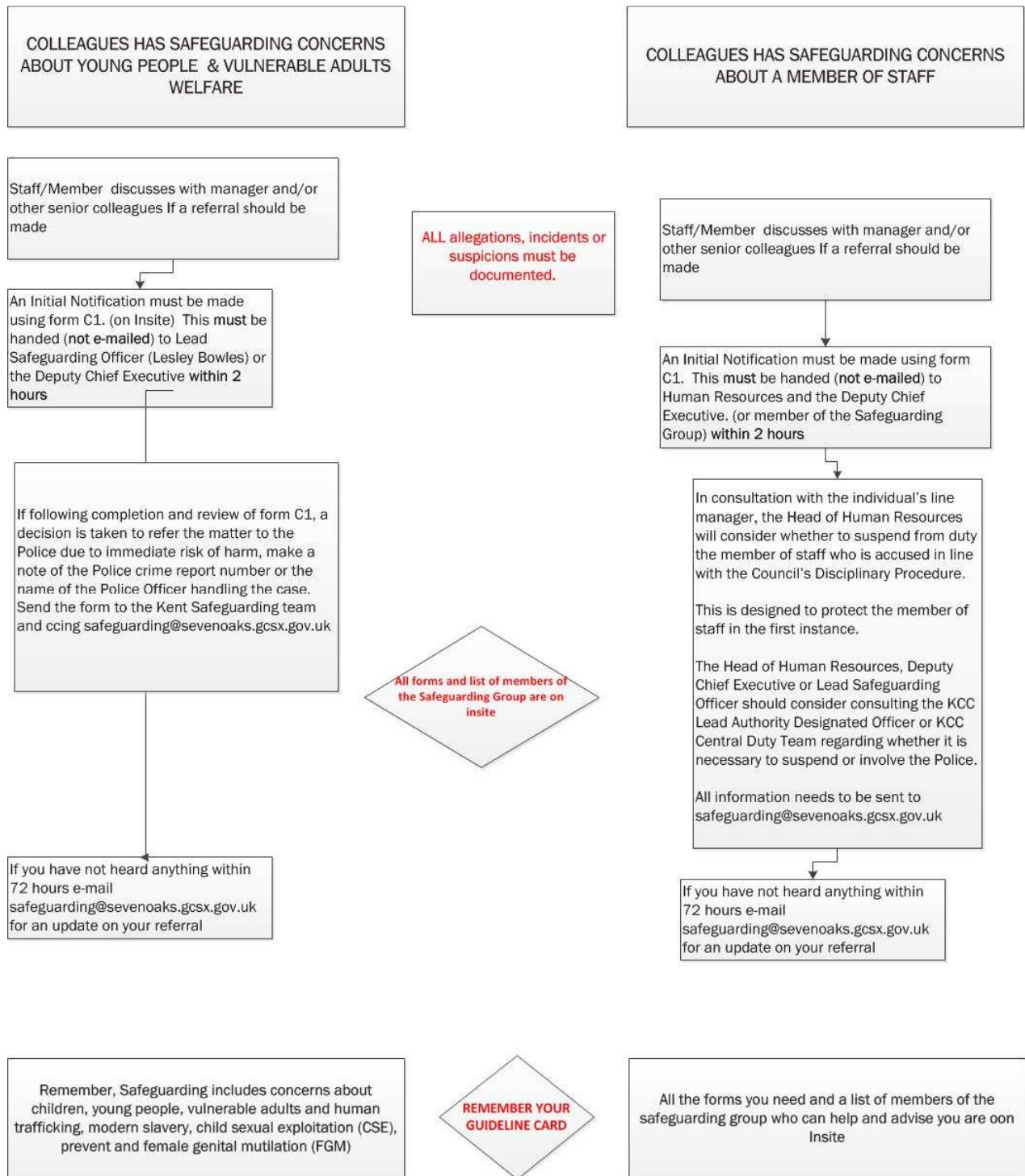
At specific points, to be determined, both Sevenoaks District Council and KCC will visit the family (without the Support Provider) to review the progress of the family.

In addition, specified officers from Sevenoaks District Council have the right to visit the family on occasion (provided with an interpreter where necessary) and request information from the Resettlement Support Provider on the progress of the family. Sevenoaks District Council also has the right for any expenditure (if reasonable and agreed) they have had to incur to be reimbursed out of the funding for the scheme.

14. Review of this Memorandum of Understanding

The terms of this Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed if either party believes it is no longer fit for purpose. A minimum of two months' notice should be given if this applies.

Sevenoaks District Council Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Flowchart Summary)



For full details please see the Sevenoaks District Council's Safeguarding Policy and related forms at: https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/3/safeguarding_policy_for_children_and_vulnerable_adults

Alternatively email the Safeguarding Leads: safeguarding@sevenoaks.gov.uk