

Decision Report – Service Director Public Health

Forward Plan Reference - FP/23/06/05

Decision Date – 4.8.23

Key Decision – Yes



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## The Continuation of the Delivery of Wrap Around Refugee Resettlement Services Through Welcome Hubs

Executive Member(s): Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity) and Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture

Local Member(s) and Division:

Lead Officer: Joseph McGregor-Harper

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### Summary / Background

1. In April 2022, as part of Somerset’s emergency response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, a contract was awarded to CHARIS Refugees to develop a network of welcome hubs in collaboration with other VCSE partners and Somerset Council. Since then, 6 Welcome Hubs have been set up across the county and they are now successfully supporting refugees and asylum seekers on a range of issues. As multiple schemes, such as the Homes for Ukraine scheme and national asylum dispersal, continue to develop, the Displaced People Service needs to remain resilient to changes in government policy and to geo-political uncertainty. Therefore, a waiver is being sought based on limited markets and work is underway to increase the capacity of the VCFSE sector across the board to support displaced people efficiently. Whilst this work is happening, however, the welcome hub model, and the contract that underpins it, needs to be sustained until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 to ensure wrap-around support is provided effectively in the interim. The current contract from 24<sup>th</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 is worth £584,500. There is a preference to align the overall contract with the financial year and to current end date of the Homes for Ukraine scheme (March 2025) at a cost of up to £1,172,543.

## Recommendations

2. The Service Director for Public Health agrees:
  - a. To continue to invest in the existing Welcome Hub model until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 by extending the current contract, whilst the Displaced People Service seeks to build capacity in the VCFSE sector to support this population.

## Reasons for recommendations

3. While the current service provision was established as part of the emergency response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, further developments now require a long term, strategic approach. It is recommended that the current approach should be carried through to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 to align with the current timeline of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and its funding. This will allow market development and capacity building to take place and ensure further extension isn't needed. A halt in the funding for this wrap around support would have a catastrophic impact on the wellbeing of the refugee population in Somerset.

## Other options considered.

4. Other options were considered including separately contracting different organisations to run each welcome hub as well as bringing all services in house. However, it was felt that the indirect cost of these would increase the overall spend and that having increased experience and knowledge on the VCFSE side would benefit this population in the long run and increase resilience.

## Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

5. Funding for this work comes from central Government ring-fenced grants. There is no impact on Somerset Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan as the money is ring-fenced and confirmed until March 2025. There is a need to develop future proofed financial plans that takes a long-term view within the context of ring-fenced grants.
6. This work is inextricably linked to the council plan because the welcome hubs, and the wrap around support provided within them, offer clear examples of a healthy and caring Somerset and a fairer and ambitious Somerset. The

welcome hubs are places where some of the most vulnerable members of our community can receive a variety of support such as mental health care, befriending and networking events. Furthermore, the welcome hubs are a place for residents of Somerset to become hosts or volunteers to help support displaced people.

## **Financial and Risk Implications**

7. Somerset Council receives a ringfenced £10,500 grant per Ukrainian refugee that arrives in Somerset on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Since the beginning of the scheme, Somerset has welcomed over 1500 refugees. Financial decisions are made in a multi-agency environment to ensure transparency on how the money is spent and to ensure value for money. Therefore, there are no financial implications for the wider council. Somerset Council draws down this funding on a quarterly basis and is confirmed to run to March 2025. We are confident that this funding source is reliable and will be able to fund this work in its entirety. Furthermore, an application to the European Social Fund of £1.8 million is expected to arrive in August 2023 which can be available to fund this work.
8. There are certain low-level risks which are being managed within current contract management processes:
  - There is a risk of potential inconsistency in service delivery between welcome hubs as they are run by different organisations. To mitigate this, The Displaced People Service are working with the contract manager at Charis Refugees to ensure core services are delivered across the network. Furthermore, services such as mental health support and translation and interpretation, which were previously being provided ad hoc, are being extrapolated from the current contract to ensure consistency.
  - There is a risk that organisations who are running the welcome hubs will decide to halt their provision. In this instance we will ensure there is flexibility in the model to allow another organisation to fill in during the interim to allow a longer-term solution to be found.

## **Legal Implications**

9. No further legal implications as this decision relates to a contract extension

## **HR Implications**

10. None

## **Other Implications:**

## **Equalities Implications**

11. The welcome hub model aims to provide wrap around support to all displaced people in the County. The Displaced People Service is in regular communication with delivery partners and other stakeholders to ensure each welcome hub is accessible to protected groups and have put mitigations in place to ensure access is equitable within this population.

## **Community Safety Implications**

12. There is a likelihood that this work would reduce the impact of social isolation and exclusion on the displaced people population. The welcome hub model aims to integrate this population into the Somerset community by increasing their social capital, helping them to look for work and education, as well as supporting them into sustainable housing solutions. Furthermore, by holding networking events, as well as sporting or arts events, this work aims to increase the quality of life and the wellbeing of this population during their time in Somerset. We hope that these factors would have an onward positive affect on crime and reoffending rates and help prevent disorder.

## **Climate Change and Sustainability Implications**

13. There are minimal climate change implications tied to this work. When the displaced people service was reacting to the Homes for Ukraine scheme being set up, we endeavoured to meet the needs of the displaced people population as close to where they were being housed. Consequently, there are 6 welcome hubs around the county allowing for easy access. This has positive onward affects when it comes to Climate change due to reduced travel distances.

## **Health and Safety Implications**

14. Some Somerset Council staff are expected to work within the welcome hubs to support displaced people. There is not an increased risk in terms of health and

safety compared to other Somerset staff working in the community. Somerset staff are not expected to visit people in their own homes.

### **Health and Wellbeing Implications**

15. It is expected that this work will have significant positive impacts on health and wellbeing by increasing access to health services, including mental health. This work sits within a preventative model of healthcare as it addresses the upstream, wider determinants of health by increasing access to education and housing. This work has foundations in reducing health inequalities as the welcome hub model directly targets one of the most vulnerable populations within Somerset.

### **Social Value**

16. The welcome hub model is based on providing social value to the displaced people population in Somerset as well ensuring social cohesion with the general population. The welcome hubs will provide opportunities in education, housing, welfare and has already supported guests in setting up SMEs. Furthermore, there is funding set aside for the welcome hubs to organise events in their local community to create a positive culture regarding displaced people in Somerset.

### **Scrutiny comments / recommendations:**

17. The Scrutiny Chair - Communities Committee, Councillor Gwil Wren, has given his full support to this key decision.

### **Background**

18. In March 2022, in response to the war in Ukraine, the UK Government announced a new resettlement scheme called 'Homes for Ukraine'. Since then, Somerset has welcomed over 1500 Ukrainian refugees into the county. Those arriving from Ukraine require access to a range of services including health, transport, and housing. In response to this influx of people, Somerset Council and partners have established support systems for refugees and asylum seekers to enable a smooth integration into the county.

The funding of the welcome hub model is guaranteed through the Homes for Ukraine funding stream. Somerset Council receives £10,500 for every Ukrainian refugee who is sponsored in Somerset. This means all services

delivered through this contract are fully funded by this Central Government ring-fenced grant. Therefore, the Displaced People service has sufficient resources to fund the welcome hub model, and to pay for continued delivery if needed. The current contract from 24<sup>th</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 is worth £584,500. There is a preference to align the overall contract with the financial year and to current end date of the Homes for Ukraine scheme (March 2025) at a cost of £1,172,543.

Charis Refugees are the only voluntary sector agency with capacity to deliver support to refugees and asylum seekers in Somerset. In April 2022 through a waiver based on it being an unforeseen emergency a contract was directly awarded to Charis Refugees to develop a welcome hub model in collaboration with other VCSE partners and Somerset Council. Since then, 6 Welcome Hubs have been set up across the county and they are now successfully supporting refugees and asylum seekers on a range of issues. The contract was initially awarded for 1 year due to the unpredictable nature of the war in Ukraine and the reactivity of government policy with regards to both the Homes for Ukraine scheme and to displaced people (refugees and asylum seekers) more generally.

Somerset has seen more than a 10-fold increase in the number of displaced people resettling into the county in the past year. The displaced people service expects this increase to continue throughout the next 18 months due to mandated asylum dispersal (Somerset has an allocation of 399 asylum seekers), the continuation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and the strong assumption of more asylum hotels to be stood up in the county. The displaced people service is looking to build on the welcome hub model throughout the next 18 months to ensure this population is supported in an effective and resilient way.

## **Background Papers**

19. None

## **Appendices**




20. None

## Report Sign-Off

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	2.08.23
Communications	Chris Palmer	31.7.23
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	19.7.23
Workforce	Chris Squire	20.7.23
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	21.7.23
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Trudi Grant	4.8.23
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	26.7.23
Executive Lead Member		
<b>Consulted:</b>	Councillor Name	
Local Division Members		On publication of notification
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Lucy Trimnell	26.7.23
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Gwil Wren	26.7.23

## Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or  
[www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment)

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	 <b>Somerset</b> Council		 <b>NHS</b> <b>Somerset</b>		 <b>NHS</b> <b>Somerset</b> NHS Foundation Trust	
Version	V1		Date Completed	14.7.23		
Description of what is being impact assessed						
The extension of the welcome hub model which provides support infrastructure for displaced people in Somerset.						
Evidence						
<p><b>What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?</b> Sources such as the <a href="#">Office of National Statistics</a>, <a href="#">Somerset Intelligence Partnership</a>, <a href="#">Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA)</a>, Staff and/ or <a href="#">area profiles</a>, should be detailed here</p>						
<p>This EIA has been informed by a central government database, Foundry, which holds all available data with regards to Ukrainian refugees entering the county. Furthermore, since the welcome hub model has been operational for nearly 12 months, a lot of leaning has been gathered as to the accessibility of the model for protected groups which has been incorporated into this EIA.</p>						



**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?**

The Displaced People Service is in constant communication with delivery partners to ensure that the welcome hubs are accessible to protected groups. For example, as part of this model some delivery partners have decided to start a mobile welcome hub to increase accessibility to those who may find it more difficult to travel to the hub locations.

**Analysis of impact on protected groups**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Welcome hubs are open to all ages and provide services aimed a different age group.</li> <li>Members of staff and volunteers from a variety of organisations are on hand to provide extra support to families to ensure children have equitable access to education.</li> </ul>	☐	☐	☒

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many will be suffering the trauma of recent experiences which may manifest itself differently in certain age groups.</li> </ul>			
<b>Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When receiving cases with identified disabilities, consideration will be given to whether available local resources can meet the specific needs of that case. This might include housing, accessibility, SEND provision, and/or health and social care. Limited resources may result in a case being rejected, should it not be possible to meet the need.</li> <li>• The welcome hubs need to wheelchair accessible for people with barriers to their mobility</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67% of guests have identified as female due to the requirement of adult males to remain in Ukraine. It is not known whether any of these people have undergone gender reassignment. The welcome hubs exist to address any needs an individual may have. Services working within the welcome hub need to be aware of services suitable for this group in order to support them</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This service does not require any checks of marital status to access.</li> <li>• It is not anticipated that guests will receive a different service according to marriage status.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□

<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some guests will be pregnant or parents of babies or young children. They will need to access appropriate healthcare (including immunisations), financial support and childcare among other specific needs. The hubs will provide an opportunity to signpost or potentially deliver some of this.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The vast majority of refugees in Somerset are from Ukraine and are being sponsored by Somerset residents. ESOL provision is a core service which will be provided in each of the welcome hubs and is available to all refugees and asylum seekers.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The welcome hubs create an opportunity for displaced people to be signposted to faith-based services at a time when they may be needed most.</li> <li>The welcome hubs may not have a full list of services available.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender specific spaces may be required to better enable support. The current supplier has experience of this need due to working with multiple resettlement programs relating to a variety of ethnicities and religions.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guests will not be asked their sexual orientation. It is not anticipated that the services offered will vary dependant on sexual orientation. There may be cultural value differences and the hub model includes plans to offer cultural orientation sessions.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some guests may have served in the armed forces prior to arriving in the UK. Welcome hubs are well equipped to provide any services that they may need and will have the ability to refer onto specific support services.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many guests will reside in rural parts of the county.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Negative outcomes action plan**  
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Disability- all welcome hubs are wheelchair accessible	14/07/2023	Joseph McGregor-Harper	Contract discussions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other: all Ukrainian guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme are eligible for a £500 transport grant.	14/07/2023	Joseph McGregor-Harper	Transport grant uptake	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

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<b>Completed by:</b>	Joseph McGregor-Harper
<b>Date</b>	14.7.23
<b>Signed off by:</b>	Matthew Hibbert
<b>Date</b>	19.7.23
<b>Equality Lead sign off name:</b>	Tom Rutland
<b>Equality Lead sign off date:</b>	
<b>To be reviewed by: (officer name)</b>	
<b>Review date:</b>	