

Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision:

Refugee Resettlement Manager – Emma Moonlight

Officer Making the Decision:

Chief Executive - Rob Mitchell

Recommendation:

That approval is given to create a new Asylum Support Assistant role in the Refugee Resettlement Service to provide comprehensive administration support.

The new Asylum Support Assistant role has been evaluated at grade C and will initially be for a fixed term period of 12 months and is full-time.

The post will be fully funded by the Home Office Asylum Dispersal Grant.

Reason:

As a result of the increased population of asylum seekers and new refugees in the Borough, the Refugee Resettlement Service has seen a marked increase in queries regarding eligibility for services from statutory services and voluntary organisations, internal services, and from customers.

In addition, the Housing Options Service has seen an increasing number of homeless applications made by former asylum seekers once they have received their refugee status. The teams are working closely together to ensure that any additional Bed and Breakfast costs incurred by this cohort are covered by the asylum funding.

There is therefore the need to introduce a new Asylum Support Assistant role who will provide administration support to the Refugee Resettlement Manager to ensure that the impact of the Full Dispersal Model 2 is understood and quantified, to record spend and income, and to ensure relevant internal and external services have access to the relevant information.

Authority for Decision:

Under Section 8 of Constitution the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) has delegated authority to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major operational disruption or interruption or services or involving a change from direct to indirect provision or vice versa or other policy implications.

On 15th February 2024 the Leader of the Council approved the delegation of the authority for extensions to the Refugee Resettlement Service, by periods of up to 12 months, to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing.

Decision and Date:



Rob Mitchell
Chief Executive 25/09/2024

Background:

The UK has seen a steady increase in numbers of people seeking asylum since 2010, with a sharp rise in 2021 and 2022, peaking at 81,130 applicants in 2022. As a result of the increase in numbers and a build-up of claims to be processed due to the Covid pandemic, an unsustainable amount of pressure was placed on a small number of Local Authorities in dispersal areas to accommodate these individuals.

In April 2022, the then Minister for Safe and Legal Migration wrote to Local Authorities to announce that all local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales would be expected to participate in a new system of full dispersal. The Full Asylum Dispersal Model, which set out the Home Office's plans to procure asylum dispersal hotels across England, Scotland and Wales, was implemented in April 2023.

In 2024, due to lack of progress made under the first iteration of the plan in 2023 and early 2024, the Home Office introduced the Full Dispersal Model 2. This followed a review into the different methodologies and indexing which was used to calculate the Dispersal Accommodation Procurement Plans.

Each Local Authority was presented with a data set and the target number of bedspaces for asylum seekers in their area. In Charnwood Borough Council, the target number of bedspaces is now set at 603. As of 4th July 2024, Serco have a total of five dispersal properties in use, with a total of 28 active service users.

In addition, Charnwood has seen two contingency hotels being used in the Borough to house asylum seekers until their claims are assessed or until they are moved into dispersal accommodation. There are approximately 150 bedspaces in the two hotels.

The hotels are expected to remain in use for the foreseeable future given that the number of asylum seekers arriving in the UK remains high and taking into account the challenges in sourcing suitable dispersal accommodation across England, Wales and Scotland.

A Job Evaluation panel evaluated the Refugee Resettlement Team Leader post on 11th July 2024 as grade C.

Summary of Advice Provided by HR:

HR Advisor: S Choudhury (04/09/24)

Summary of Comments from HR: Once the DD is approved, management will need to recruit in line with CBCs recruitment policy.

Financial Implications:

The post will be fully funded from the Home Office Asylum Dispersal Grant. The funding remaining from the 2023-2024 grant will cover the full cost of the post.

The cost of creating a new role at Grade C for 37 hours and a period of 12 months is £36,989.00 including on-costs.

Total costs: £36,989.00

Posts will be in Cost Centre F319.

Risk Management:

No specific risks have been identified in connection with this decision.

Key Decision:

No

Background Papers:

N/A

