



## Report to Policy Committee

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**Report of:** *Eugene Walker*

**Report to:** *Strategy & Resources Committee*

**Date of Decision:** *5<sup>th</sup> December 2022*

**Subject:** *Asylum Dispersal Grant*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 1311				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				
<p><i>“The (<b>report/appendix</b>) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (<b>insert relevant paragraph number</b>) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>				

### **Purpose of Report:**

The government have made provision for an [Asylum Dispersal Grant](#) to be paid to Local Authorities, along with additional funding to ‘*recognise the existing contribution and longstanding support*’ of local authorities accommodating asylum seekers.

The purpose of the report is to seek endorsement by the Committee of the proposed allocation of funding from the grant to support development of capacity to promote strong city leadership, a stepping-stone towards growth within the VCFS and strategic work to ensure a good quality, consistent and effective response to those seeking asylum and refuge in the city.

**Recommendations:**

The Strategy & Resources Committee endorses the use of the Asylum Dispersal Grant and Asylum Dispersal funding to be utilised as detailed in this report, with the purpose of:

- Providing funding for the continuation of the current Communities Asylum & Migration team function to continue beyond March 2023.
- Supporting identified partners to provide strategically important, good quality services known to benefit those seeking asylum and sanctuary and approves grants in line with this report.
- Provide an Open Grant Pot for bids from a broad range of organisations working for the benefit of the asylum and refugee community.
- Where no such authority exists under the Constitution delegate to the Director of Integrated Commissioning in consultation with the Director of Communities and Director of Culture and Environment authority to agree the amounts, purposes and recipients of any individual grants awarded in year from the Grant Funds including any additional sums received, returned or unpaid
- Ringfence and carry forward all Asylum Dispersal money received into the 2023/24 financial year.

**Background Papers:**

<b>Lead Officer to complete:-</b>	
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.
	Finance: Sonya Oates
	Legal: Nadine Wynter
	Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton
	Climate: N/A
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>
2	<b>SLB member who approved submission:</b> Eugene Walker
3	<b>Committee Chair consulted:</b> Richard Williams
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for

submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Beth Storm	<b>Job Title:</b> Strategic Lead – Asylum & Migration
<b>Date:</b> 22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2022	

## 1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Nationally, there are significant, ongoing pressures on the asylum system, including an increasing backlog of undetermined applications and higher demand for accommodation due to the increase in the supported asylum population.

As the UK's first City of Sanctuary, Sheffield has participated in asylum dispersal for many years.

Participation in asylum dispersal has historically been optional for local authorities. Historic government policy has meant that asylum has been the 'poor relation' of refugee and resettlement pathways and government have not made reimbursement for costs associated with supporting dispersal arrangements.

In recognition of '*concerns raised... in relation to pressure on local services associated with supporting asylum seekers*', the government have made provision for an [Asylum Dispersal Grant](#) to be paid to Local Authorities along with additional funding to '*recognise the existing contribution and longstanding support*' of local authorities accommodating asylum seekers.

All Local Authorities in receipt of the funding have discretion regarding spend, providing the money is '*used to implement and/or bolster services*' for this cohort.

The funding will support redressing this inequity to enable Sheffield to begin to address systemic inequality between this group, and those who have sought refugee status and sanctuary via other routes of entry.

We know with certainty, that the quality of our collective response is important in preventing secondary costs to services, the city and people. As we have seen demonstrated in Sheffield, social and economic impacts of failure demand, created by lack of planning and early action can be significant and long-lasting.

The Strategy & Resources Committee are asked to support and endorse the following.

The VCFS, led by City of Sanctuary, VAS and SPRING have identified the value of SCC being positioned to occupy a space of strong city leadership, driving co-ordination and partnership working, as being significantly important to the sector, and pivotal in creating a successful, inclusive city.

Current financial arrangements enable the current Communities Asylum & Migration team function to continue until March 2023, although no

resource is currently allocated to this work beyond this point.

The Asylum Dispersal Grant offers opportunity to fund continuation of this function for the 2023/24 (and 2024/25) financial year(s). Indicative costs (based on current available figures) are set out below.

			<b>Basic Salary 22/23</b>	<b>Overheads</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
			(Based on 2% from 21/22 - actuals required)		
Strategic Lead	G11	SCP46	50,787	66,023	
Strategic Development Officer (G7/8 – subject to responsibility)	G7	SCP27	31,973	41,565	
	G8	SCP32	36,460	47,398	
Senior Support Officer (pending recruitment)	G5	SCP15	24,012	31,215	
					<b>138,803</b> (1yr with G7)
					<b>144,636</b> (1yr with G8)
					<b>277,606</b> (2yrs with G7)
					<b>289,272</b> (2yrs with G8)

Continuity of posts in this structure require commitment through the General Fund from 2024/25 onwards.

Funding should also be made available to VCFS providers who continue to occupy a significant space in providing wraparound support to those seeking asylum as well as those arriving via other resettlement and refugee pathways.

- **Funding for Strategic Partners:** Under the guidance of colleagues in the Voluntary Sector Liaison Team, allocate grants to identified organisations who provide good quality specific / niche services known to benefit those seeking asylum and refuge.

Partners include (but are not necessarily limited to) organisations such as City of Sanctuary who run a ‘drop-in’ advice service for asylum seekers and refugees and the SPRING Partnership, providing a variety of services to those newly granted status in the city.

Initial discussions with both City of Sanctuary and SPRING suggest they would each seek funding up to £100,000, to be utilised over a 1 – 3-year period, which could help leverage match funding to promote

longer term sustainability.

- **Open Grant Pot:** Under the guidance of colleagues in the Voluntary Sector Liaison Team, host a funding round, inviting bids from a broad group of organisations working for the benefit of the asylum and refugee community.

This would encourage approaches from multiple providers working in the same / similar space. Examples of those who may apply through this route include organisations supporting infrastructure outcomes of those newly arrived to the city e.g. health, housing and so on.

Specific communities seeking to establish themselves may also apply e.g., geographical communities such as those from Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Ukraine as well as inclusion and faith communities. Examples of support may include accommodation for social meetings, food banks offering culturally appropriate food etc.

Both approaches support strategic work noted above to ensuring a good quality, consistent and effective response to those seeking asylum and refuge in the city.

The Home Office funding instruction does not specify a date by which money has to be spent. It is therefore recommended that a commitment is made to ringfence and carry forward all Asylum Dispersal money received into the 2023/24 financial year.

### Overview

At the time of writing, based on known in-year Asylum Dispersal Grant funding, Sheffield will be in receipt of a minimum of a minimum of £653,500.

Indicative expenditure as described above:

Item	Cost
<b>Continuation of SCC Strategic Asylum Function:</b>	
- 2023/24	144,636
- 2024/25	144,636
<b>Strategic Partners:</b>	
- City of Sanctuary	75,000
- SPRING	75,000
<b>Open Grant Pot:</b>	214,228 (minimum)
<b>Total</b>	<b>653,500</b>

This figure does not account for any further bedspaces created across the city during the remainder of the 2022/23 financial year. It is highly likely that further bedspaces will be created during the remaining period, thus increasing the receipt to the city.

These recommendations support development of capacity to promote strong city leadership, and a stepping-stone towards growth within the VCFS for the benefit of those seeking sanctuary in the city.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?**

- 2.1 The recommendations support development of capacity to promote strong city leadership, and a stepping-stone towards growth within the VCFS for the benefit of those seeking sanctuary in the city.

We know from experience and extensive partnership working, that the success of the asylum cohort is ultimately, our success and in turn, their failure, our failure.

Sheffield have long made the case for government support in respect of asylum seekers due to demand on infrastructure, service provision and host communities, as well on the VCFS wraparound provision.

The outcomes impact not only on the specific cohort, but also the wider city and its residents, including economic and social prosperity.

Asylum and the resulting migration, shapes and impacts on the identity and prosperity of our city. The effects are visible in all aspects of everyday life - in our geographical communities, our schools, places of worship, retail centres and on infrastructure such as housing, health & social care and policing.

This funding will be significant in our ability to work collaboratively, demonstrating clear direction and collective leadership, placing the foundations for an integrated, prosperous, inclusive city.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 The VCFS, led by City of Sanctuary, VAS and SPRING have identified the value of SCC being positioned to occupy a space of strong city leadership, driving co-ordination and partnership working, as being significantly important to the sector, and pivotal in creating a successful, inclusive city.

Consultation and engagement with the sector and relevant stakeholders will be carried out including workshops with stakeholders and statutory partners to begin to design a future model for equitable provision for those seeking sanctuary in Sheffield, based on need and a model which can flex in accordance with demand and financial capacity.

## **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **4.1 Equality Implications**

- 4.1.1 There are no disproportionate equality of opportunity implications arising

from this proposal.

## 4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

### 4.2.1 The Asylum Dispersal Scheme Grant is funded by the Home Office. Key features and terms and conditions of the grant are highlighted below:

Funding will be made in respect of costs to the Authority in fulfilling its statutory duties with regard to the scheme.

The grant must not be used for any other purpose than as set out in the Funding Instruction. Funding must also not be moved elsewhere without permission from the Home Office.

Funding issues arising from an Asylum Seeker moving to another authority must be resolved by the recipient and the relevant local authority.

Any overpayments must be reported, including where the funding required is lower than expected. Overpayments will be clawed back, or further payments adjusted as appropriate. Clawback of funds will also occur in the event that the grant conditions have not been met.

Unauthorised expenditure that exceeds funding levels will not be reimbursed.

Final checks will be made after the grant support period to ensure that payments made accurately reflect the grant entitlement.

Site visits will be made to Local Authorities who have received £100,000 or above.

#### Procurement:

All public sector procurement is governed by UK National Law. In addition, all procurement in Sheffield City Council must comply with its own Procurement Policy, and internal regulations known as 'Contracts Standing Orders' (CSOs).

Contracts Standing Orders requirements will apply in full to the procurement of services, goods or works utilising grants. All grant monies must be treated in the same way as any other Council monies and any requirement to purchase/acquire services, goods or works must go via a competitive process.

The Project Manager will need to read, understand and comply with all of the grant terms and conditions and the [Code of Conduct for Grant Recipients](#).

## 4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 The Council has neither the statutory duty nor any specific power to provide financial support or accommodation to Asylum Seekers. Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 provides that the Secretary of State may provide or arrange for the provision of support Asylum seekers and their dependants who appear to be destitute.
- 4.3.2 The Council has a general power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that an individual may generally do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation and the power is exercised in accordance with the limitations specified in the Act which enables the Council to allocate or spend the grant funding as set out in this report.
- 4.3.3 If an asylum Seeker is granted Refugee Status, Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary leave (unless there is 'No Recourse to Public Funds'); or indefinite Leave to Remain, they are then able to access mainstream benefits and services on the same basis as a British National. Where an Asylum Seeker is granted one of these statuses the Council may have a statutory obligation to prevent homelessness.
- 4.3.4 There is no formal grant agreement, the Home Office have issued a funding instruction to all applicable Local Authorities and the money will be paid directly into the Councils bank account.
- 4.3.5 The Council is receiving this grant from the Home Office under s.110 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and can accept this funding further to s.31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 4.3.6 Please see 4.2 above which highlights the key terms and conditions of the funding provided.
- 4.3.7 Under clause 3.4 of the funding agreement the Council has wide discretion on how best to utilise and spend the grant funds to achieve the required objectives.
- 4.3.8 A written permission has been gained from the Home Office to ringfenced the grant funds and carry forward any unspent funds into the next financial year.

#### 4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 N/A

#### 4.4 Other Implications

*(Refer to the decision making guidance and provide details of all relevant implications, e.g. human resources, property, public health).*

4.4.1 N/A

### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 The Asylum Dispersal Grant will enable Sheffield to begin to address systemic inequality between asylum seekers and those who have sought refugee status and sanctuary via other routes of entry, including provision of wrap support for this vulnerable group. Given the clear benefit, other potential action e.g. to decline the funding, was rejected.

## 6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Given what we know about current numbers in the national, and local asylum estate, retention of refugees in the city and the importance of developing support for refugees to achieve socio-economic success, it is vital that we look beyond short-term demand regarding placement and care of asylum seekers in the city.

This funding is an opportunity to think not only operationally, but strategically to maximise impact for the city in the longer term.

This funding will be significant to enable systemic change and an important step in placing the foundations for an **integrated, prosperous, inclusive city**.

The recommendation will support development of capacity to promote strong city leadership, a stepping-stone towards growth within the VCFS and strategic work to ensure a good quality, consistent and effective response to those seeking asylum and refuge in the city.