

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
23 September 2021**

REPORT AUTHOR: Portfolio Holders for Adult Social Care, Education & Property and Housing, Planning and Economic Regeneration

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Tim Van-Rees

Having benefitted from the assistance of interpreters and other locally enlisted personnel during my service overseas I would commend the Cabinet in deciding to offer accommodation to six families of refugees from Afghanistan.

Having regard to the state of affairs in that unhappy country there is likely to be a requirement for accommodation for a significantly larger number of refugees and indeed provision for the education of their children. What contingency plans has the Cabinet made in an event of an approach from HMG / Welsh Government for additional assistance?

Response

Powys County Council has pledged to provide homes for six families as part of the national Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme (ARAP). After discussions with housing associations the council has been able to increase the previous offer.

The variety and complexity of the needs of the Afghan families, coupled with the rural nature of Powys, provides the Council with a number of challenges in scaling up provision. We need to ensure that both housing and support needs are fully met so that these families can settle quickly and thrive within their new communities when they move to Powys. In order to meet these challenges, services are able to draw on experience from the successful Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Project, where the council works in partnership to ensure that wrap around accessible support is readily available.

Families recently displaced from Afghanistan are part of a wider and growing need from refugee and asylum seeking households. To this end, Powys County Council is also working in partnership with the Welsh Refugee Council and Clearsprings, the organisation tasked with finding homes for asylum seekers and secure suitable accommodation within the private rented sector.

Schools are well prepared for accepting pupils from refugee families through the usual admissions process at the Local Authority. The Admissions Team are aware that refugee families will be settling in Powys, and are building on the already established link with the Vulnerable Groups team to ensure that they are notified of

any admissions applications received in respect of refugee families from Afghanistan, in the same way as they do for refugee families from Syria. School places are available and the Admissions Team will be able to provide information about schools in the area that the families move to.