

# Information

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## for County Councillors

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To:	All County Councillors
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## Syrian resettlement programme update

### Introduction

This is an update following the Members Information Sheet distributed before Christmas about Somerset's response to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS).

The Government has pledged to take 20,000 Syrian refugees over a five-year period through the scheme and sought volunteer councils to support the scheme. Somerset's district councils, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the County Council have agreed a joint response to the Government's request.

A Cabinet Member decision taken in December confirmed the County Council's support for the agreed approach which will see Somerset welcome an initial six refugee families in the spring, with the potential for more in the future.

### Update

Somerset has formally accepted to resettle five families and are awaiting a final sixth profile as one of our original families had to drop out.

Two families will be settled in Mendip District Council's area, two in South Somerset, and one in Taunton Deane Borough Council's area. The sixth family also planned to be located in Taunton Deane, subject to usual considerations on being able to support the specific family needs.

There are 18 people in the five families, nine adults and nine children. All families are being accommodated in private rental properties. All children of school age have been accepted to schools with pre-existing capacity. There is capacity in other support services.

We have a provisional arrival time for the families in late March/early April.

A joint working programme bringing together input from County Council services, District level services, Clinical Commissioners and Community groups will organise the wrap around support programme.

## Background/further information

The Somerset approach is a measured one and in line with many local authorities. The county is not an established 'asylum dispersal area' and not geared-up to cater for refugees. It is felt that six families is enough for us to deliver the support they may need and for families to offer each other support.

As comparison, Plymouth has initially taken three families, BANES four and Wiltshire eight.

Some key points:

- Families are only being resettled where the services, such as school places, health and social care, have the capacity to cater for them.
- Accommodation will be provided through the private rented sector so there will be no impact on the district council housing waiting lists.
- Decisions about resettlement locations have been made based on the support needs of the families. Mendip, Taunton Deane and South Somerset have been chosen as the host districts but all districts have been actively involved in discussions and planning.
- There is no need to host Syrian refugees in people's homes. Anyone offering their home for rental to a refugee family should contact district council Housing Options Teams.
- The SVPRS is fully-funded by the Government. There should be no impact on council finances.
- Community groups have been included in discussions but initially statutory authorities have arranged housing, health, education, benefit income, individual family support and interpreters.

Please find attached some useful questions and answers on this subject.

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