



For Immediate Release

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Partnership approach to supporting families leaving Afghanistan

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council is working with local housing providers and other partners to offer homes for families who have had to leave Afghanistan. In April 2021, the government launched the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme to offer former locally employed staff in Afghanistan relocation opportunities and other assistance, in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013.

Under the scheme, any current or former locally employed staff assessed to have a serious threat to life will be offered priority relocation to the UK.

Following the latest developments in Afghanistan, the scheme is being stepped up, with an initial four properties to be made available in the borough.

The council is working closely with Hampshire County Council, housing providers Sovereign and VIVID and the Social Inclusion Partnership to coordinate a range of support services for new families arriving in the borough.

Hampshire County Council will lead the response working closely with the Home Office.

In addition to this scheme, this week the government announced an additional scheme – the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme – which will welcome up to 20,000 refugees from Afghanistan. The council and its partners are awaiting further guidance from the government on the support needed as part of this new scheme.

Cabinet Member for Homes and Housing Regeneration Cllr Tristan Robinson said: "The distressing scenes witnessed this week in Afghanistan have affected many people across the country and within our own borough.

"We have a moral obligation to help people fleeing from potential violence and persecution, especially those who assisted the British Armed Forces abroad. Through our strong links with the Armed Forces Covenant, we are committed to ensuring Basingstoke and Deane plays its part in assisting the government plans, as more guidance becomes available, to provide homes for Afghan refugees in the coming years."

"We will be working closely with our partners across the borough to ensure any families moving here will be given the support they need to restart their lives."

Alex Nagle, Director of Customer Service at VIVID, said: "We've all been struck by the sad events that have unfolded in Afghanistan over the last week. We want to do what we can, alongside our partners, to provide safe and secure homes for families relocating to the area, giving them the foundations to help rebuild their lives and have brighter futures."

Luke Bingham, Housing Director for Sovereign, said: "We'll do all we can to support local authority partners and the government, fully embracing our role in re-housing those now forced to leave their homes in Afghanistan, who worked alongside and provided assistance to our own Armed Forces."

Those who qualify and choose to relocate to the UK with their families will complete five years of limited leave and following this period, they can apply for permanent residence in the UK, free of charge, ensuring that they can settle here permanently and continue to build their lives and future here.

For more information about the scheme, please visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-locally-engaged-staff

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