

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Refugee Resettlement Programme

Responsible Officer

Sian Da Silva - CED SPRCA

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Michael Thomas-Sam - CED SPRCA

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

Service Redesign

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

Commissioning/Procurement

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Strategic and Corporate Services

Responsible Service

Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance

Responsible Head of Service

Michael Thomas-Sam - CED SPRCA

Responsible Director

David Whittle - CED SPRCA

Aims and Objectives

This EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment) is the assessment of the statutory duties Equality, Diversity and protected characteristics in relation to the way KCC is proposing to provide, either via an in-house team or through commissioning an external provider, elements of the support to refugees settling in Kent. It is a live document and will be updated as a decision is made in relation to finalising which specific service delivery model is agreed upon.

Housing authorities (the district/borough/city councils in Kent) are responsible for decisions on the number of refugee families to be resettled in their area and for the housing to be used. With regard to the resettlement support, it was agreed that KCC should co-ordinate the service in partnership with those districts/borough councils that wished to take part. Ten districts have opted to use the KCC scheme. Ashford Borough Council and Canterbury City Council decided to provide the support directly themselves and from February 2025, Dover will also support any new families resettled in their area. KCC will continue to support those existing families in Dover it already works with until such a time as they leave the scheme.

The number of families resettling in Kent depends on acceptance by each district housing authority, the flow of referrals from the Home Office Resettlement Team and the availability of suitable accommodation in the county.

Individuals resettled under the scheme are given three to five years Refugee status or Indefinite Leave to Remain depending on the scheme they are supported under, and as such can work, rent, claim benefits and other public funds from day one. The Home Office has specified in the Funding Instructions what support needs to be in place for the families resettled under the schemes they support, currently the– United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), formerly the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the two pathways for Afghan citizens, the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Programme (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

The support provided is expected to be intensive in the initial weeks following arrival and then to decrease gradually as the family integrates into their local community and settles into their new home. Accommodation is normally provided in the private rented sector. The families can claim Housing Benefit/Universal Credit for housing costs and benefits for daily living costs, depending on their circumstances. If they can take up employment these benefits will reduce over time, depending on levels of earnings.

The proposed direct support service will either be provided through a new commissioning model to make it more likely that the service is delivered by one commissioned provider (currently three providers deliver the service across Kent), or through the implementation of an internal KCC team. The support consists of immediate assistance to families upon their arrival in the UK with settling into accommodation and assistance to access immediate services and support deemed necessary. The service will then continue to provide casework support to families for a three-to five-year period from their arrival in the UK, (dependant on relevant scheme terms). This would include the development and implementation of an Integration Support Plan (ISP) for each family, enabling them to access all the services and support they require (either from mainstream services or bespoke provision under the scheme). The individual nature of the integration plan takes into consideration each individuals circumstances and particular needs, therefore protected characteristics and equality are at the core of the teams’ function and method of working.

Whichever delivery model is finally agreed upon, KCC will retain the coordination and management of the scheme and district housing authorities will remain responsible for decisions on the number of refugee families to be resettled and for the housing to be used. The KCC Refugee Resettlement Team will be responsible for monitoring and delivering the service provided either by use of an internal direct support team or through use of the newly commissioned provider, measuring delivery against the scheme funding instructions and ISP for each person and tailoring support in accordance with progression and outcomes towards integration into mainstream services within the UK.

The basis of the scheme (bringing vulnerable refugees to resettle in the UK), settling them in specific locations that, as far as possible, reflect their needs and, further, the way the scheme operates in Kent to assess and meet individual needs (many of which are based on the protected characteristics) means that the equality needs of individual are met in as thorough way as possible. The service delivery model will take account of these needs, experience to date managing the scheme and consultation with refugees and partners.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?
Internal review of the current provision took place in 2023. Evidence was sought of the experience and outcomes of the current support through consultation with individual clients and family groups supported under the schemes, district housing authorities, current commissioned providers, voluntary organisations who had direct contact with the scheme and clients we support, other organisations who were involved with our clients such as Health, Adult Education, Education etc. as well as looking at best practice from other refugee resettlement teams and their models in use via LAs across the UK.
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens Residents/communities/citizens
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
<p>Awareness of the protected characteristics of our clients, understanding their background, culture, ethnicity and personal experience are the core blocks on which our support is delivered. The basis of the schemes (bringing vulnerable refugees to resettle in the UK), settling them in specific locations that, as far as possible, reflect their needs and, further, the way the scheme operates in Kent to assess and meet individual needs (many of which are based on the protected characteristics) means that the equality needs of individual are met in as thorough way as possible.</p> <p>Sex/Marriage – In particular for female clients – care is taken to seek the needs and input of female clients and to address inequalities where these are found either as a result of previous gender inequality or cultural norms. These are tackled in a culturally sensitive way but allow choice through education on the law and rights in the UK.</p> <p>Culture and Faith – clients’ culture and faith is taken into consideration when placing them in accommodation which has facilities suitable for their needs where at all possible and support provided is specifically designed to ensure these needs are understood through training and cultural and religious awareness.</p> <p>Disability/Age – before arrival, individual care needs are investigated and addressed to ensure needs are met and barriers are addressed where at all possible</p> <p>Children and Caring– Where barriers exist for example access to services such as education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), employment and training as well as integration to the local community, both support models provide specific support to ensure caring responsibilities do not negatively impact those to whom this applies through create use of funding and resources and enabling access to services where at all possible.</p>
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Age
Older refugees often find it more difficult to learn English, hindering their integration into their new communities.
Mitigating Actions for Age
Consideration will be taken during the creation of Integration Support Plans to consider current literacy and education levels in relation to age and the ability to learn an additional language. Where necessary, inventive and alternative support will be introduced to ensure the ability of clients of all ages to participate in education in English which will ensure better integration to the UK.
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
Yes
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Availability of accessible housing. The lack of available accessible private rental or social housing is extremely limited meaning choice of accommodation and location is less for those with a disability.
Mitigating actions for Disability
Where possible, Kent County Council utilises available funding and with support from local housing authorities utilises this budget to fund adaptations where necessary to ensure properties meet the needs of the individuals being placed. Properties that are not suitable for those with disabilities and are not adaptable will be ruled out before families are placed.
Responsible Officer for Disability
Sian da Silva, Colin Green, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Gender roles vary between cultures. There is a risk that some female refugees may be less able to engage with the integration support offered due to their culturally defined gender role. Some refugees may arrive from countries where gender discrimination and abuse is condoned or tolerated by authorities and society. Whilst the UK may have laws to prevent gender discrimination and abuse, it still exists and refugees arriving through the schemes may be particularly vulnerable to this due to their previous experiences. This could manifest in the following ways: 1. Gender discrimination and abuse within a refugee family on the schemes. 2. Gender discrimination and abuse by individual refugees toward members of the local community. 3. Gender discrimination and abuse by individual refugees toward staff working on the schemes. 4. Gender discrimination and abuse by members of the local community and/or general public towards refugee families.
Mitigating actions for Sex
Integration Support Plans will be created for all clients taking into consideration their individual needs. Female refugees who may be experiencing barriers due to their gender will be supported to engage with services that are available to them, especially those that are culturally sensitive to nurturing female independence. The programme will deliver a range of workshops and translated materials to all refugee families on the schemes covering their rights and responsibilities in the UK, including the consequences for gender

discrimination and abuse.

If, despite these efforts, refugee families are subject to, or subject others to, gender discrimination and abuse this will be reported through the appropriate avenues.

Responsible Officer for Sex

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Yes

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Individuals and families on the schemes may arrive from countries where transgender discrimination and abuse is condoned or tolerated by authorities and society. Whilst the UK may have laws to prevent transgender discrimination and abuse, it still exists and refugees on the scheme may be particularly vulnerable to this due to their previous experiences.

This could manifest in the following ways:

1. Transgender discrimination and abuse within a refugee family on the schemes.
2. Transgender discrimination and abuse by individuals on the schemes toward members of the local community.
3. Transgender discrimination and abuse by individuals on the schemes toward staff.
4. Transgender discrimination and abuse by members of the local community and/or general public toward individuals on the schemes.

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Education will be available to all clients in relation to legalities relating to gender identity and transgender discrimination and expectations from clients in relation to this will be provided.

A confidential and supportive relationship between support worker and client will be fostered so as to ensure any clients who wish to divulge issues related to gender identity or sexuality are able to do so.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race

Yes

Negative impacts for Race

Immigration policy in the UK is a divisive topic, which can bring discrimination and racist abuse. Being a predominately white European area of Kent, settlement for those from different cultural and racial backgrounds can be more complex due to differences in services and cultural norms. Racist abuse and the targeting of clients due to their race does occur.

Different ethnicities within the cohorts we support are also at risk of marginalisation, either through lack of sufficient relevant interpretation for their specific dialects but also due to the inequality experienced between certain minorities from their country of origin. E.g. Hazara clients who are a minority group from Afghanistan and culturally in the country of origin are seen as 'lower-class' and often experience high levels of racism from others within our client group.

Mitigating actions for Race

Taking race inequality into consideration when placing families in Kent ensures where possible access to relevant cultural services and aims to avoid isolation from supportive communities and other support networks.

Tackling education on racial abuse and engaging with relevant partners such as Police and Prevent ensure where possible mitigations are in place to ensure the safety of clients we support who may be subject to racial targeting.

A variety of translation services will be used by wither model of the resettlement team to ensure relevant dialect translators are available to support as many clients from as wide a background as possible.

Particular consideration will be taken to ensure issues of racial targeting due to different ethnicities within our cohort are tackled directly. Education of the law within the UK, the risk of prosecution and withdrawal of support will also be explained to families to ensure they understand why previous norms are not acceptable in the UK.

Where acts of racism against the general community are identified perpetrated by our client cohort, these will also be tackled through an explanation of the issue and its unacceptability within the UK.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

Yes

Negative impacts for Religion and belief

Being a predominately white European area of Kent, settlement for those from different religious backgrounds can be more complex due to differences in services and cultural norms. Lack of mosque facilities, unavailability of Halal food stores can be a barrier for some families and can lead to feelings of isolation. Tackling education on misinformation in relation to other faiths and engaging with relevant partners such as Schools, Police and Prevent ensures where possible, mitigations are in place to ensure the safety of clients we support who may be subject to targeting from extremists.

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Where possible, housing is sought where the maximum number of religious facilities are available, and consideration of these religious needs takes place when orientating clients to the local area and its available facilities.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Yes

Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Refugees may arrive from countries where sexual orientation discrimination and abuse is condoned or tolerated by authorities and society. Whilst the UK may have laws to prevent sexual orientation discrimination and abuse, it still exists and refugees may be particularly vulnerable to this due to their previous experiences.

Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Education will be available to all clients in relation to LGBTQ+ issues, legalities relating to gender identity and sexuality and expectations from clients in relation to this will be provided.

A confidential and supportive relationship between support worker and client will be fostered so as to ensure any clients who wish to divulge issues related to gender identity or sexuality are able to do so.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Yes
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Due to the widespread nature of our accommodation, lack of wider social circle and extended family means those with caring responsibilities can become isolated.
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Where possible, funding is used to alleviate the burden of caring responsibilities, particularly for women and to factor in support where at all possible to ensure fair access to services is still possible for those with caring responsibilities.
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry