

Support for Afghan families

How we help Afghan families and individuals as part of the national resettlement schemes

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) is a national resettlement scheme for those brave Afghans who worked for, or with, the UK Government and British Armed Forces in Afghanistan in exposed or meaningful roles. 15,592 individuals had been relocated to the UK under the ARAP scheme by the end of March 2024.

Vale of White Horse District Council's work includes working with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to repurpose empty homes to house families and individuals arriving from Afghanistan under the ARAP scheme.

Vale of White Horse District Council have prepared a welcome pack for Afghan families who are living in temporary accommodation.

See the council's webpage whitehorsedc.gov.uk/welcomepack for details and downloadable packs.

Please see the FAQs below for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are the families and individuals under the ARAP scheme refugees or British citizens?

The families and individuals living in the UK under the ARAP scheme have British citizenship, and so have the same rights and obligations as all British citizens.

Further information on the Afghan Resettlement schemes can be found on the Government website:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy

How long are the duration of the schemes locally?

Vale of White Horse District Council are currently leasing service family accommodation (SFA) from the MOD for three years.

As British citizens, the families may choose to remain in the district or move elsewhere in the UK when they move on from the SFA properties. If a property becomes vacant, it may be used to home another family under the ARAP scheme.

How many families will move into the area?

There are 56 properties across the Vale of White Horse district being leased to ARAP families who are expected to settle in the community for at least three years. 16 of these properties are in Shrivenham and 15 are in Watchfield, with the remainder spread across the district.

The MOD are using a further 27 properties in Watchfield and Shrivenham for ARAP families who will be staying for a shorter time before moving on within the UK.

Will local services be impacted?

The Government has provided extra funding to both schools and local health services to ensure they are able to support the new families coming into the district.

Health:

- Families settling locally will be registered to practices in the nearby vicinity.
- A dedicated medical centre with additional staff has been set up in Watchfield for initial consultations for families staying for a shorter time, who may attend a local GP for any further appointments if needed.

Education:

- Children settling locally will be placed into local schools.
- Children staying for a shorter time may go to schools locally or further afield.

Oxfordshire County Council, Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire ICB are all aware and are not anticipating an impact on school places or GP appointments.

What support is provided to families?

Families are given support to settle into the community, including employment advice and English lessons. Some of these sessions are run from village halls, bringing income into the local area.

Vale of White Horse District Council works closely with Oxfordshire County Council, which provides health, education and social care support. Government funding for the resettlement schemes helps provide these services.

How can I help?

Aside from welcoming the families and integrating them into the community, there are a number of practical things you can do to support Afghan families arriving in the UK. For more information on this visit the website www.gov.uk/help-afghanistan

- **Donations:**
If you wish to donate any items, please send these to local charities. Alternatively, you may wish to post an advert for any items on local notice boards or social media pages.
- **Events:**
There have been previous events in Watchfield and Shrivenham such as the village fête, a fashion show and a sewing club, that have been successful in bringing the community together and celebrate both UK and Afghan cultures.

The Parish Council are keen to continue to welcome families and ensure all residents feel part of the community.

Are you involved with any sports clubs or organisations that could help?

Do you have any ideas for events to help welcome the families and bring the community together?

If so, please email the Parish Council at clerk@watchfield.org