



## Argyll and Bute Council Refugee and Asylum Support

*“For over a decade, Argyll and Bute have shown that welcoming refugees is not only a lifeline for those forced to flee, but a powerful way to enrich and strengthen local communities. Their unwavering commitment to dignity, independence and creativity has helped refugees and their neighbours thrive together — a true example of what successful resettlement looks like.”*

Vicky Tennant, UNHCR Representative to the UK

# Argyll and Bute

- Argyll and Bute is the second largest local authority by land area.
- With 28 inhabited islands and small mainland towns our geography is both beautiful and challenging.
- The changing demographic profile of the area presents one of our greatest challenges.
- From 2018 to 2028, the population of Argyll and Bute is projected to decrease by 5.9% which compares to a projected population increase of 1.8% for Scotland as a whole.
- Argyll and Bute's population is also predicted to continue ageing.



# Refugee Resettlement

- In December 2015, Argyll and Bute welcomed our first Syrian refugees through the UK Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.
- Ten years on, we have built expertise in supporting refugees and asylum seekers, shaped by our involvement in national resettlement programmes with person centred care, strong partnership working and a focus on community integration.
- We support refugees from Ukraine, Syria, Sudan, Somalia and Afghanistan.
- We also support unaccompanied asylum seeking young people but have yet to receive any asylum seekers through the Home Office's dispersed asylum model.



# Our story

Film:

[An Argyll and Bute Welcome](#)

Strategy:

[Appendix 1 -  
AB\\_Refugee\\_Asylum\\_Strategy\\_DIGITAL  
.pdf](#)

Website:

[Resettlement support | Argyll and Bute  
Council](#)

Committee reports:

[www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)



# Partnership working

The council is the lead agency for all resettlement programmes

The Refugee Resettlement Team links into both UK and Scottish Governments and CoSLA who support resettlement in Scotland as the UK Government's strategic migration partner.

In Argyll and Bute we have a Refugee Multi-Agency Partnership Group, membership includes:

**Council services** include Education, Housing, Business Gateway, Employability, Welfare Rights, Revenues and Benefits, Community Development, Finance, and Communications.

**Health and Social Care Partnership** contributions come from Social Work, Public Health, and Primary Care.

**Partner organisations** include Argyll Community Housing Association, West Highland Housing Association, Dunbritton Housing Association, Fyne Homes, the Department for Work and Pensions, Social Security Scotland, UHI Argyll, Live Argyll, Police Scotland, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

**Third sector partners** include Argyll TSI, Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau, Bute Advice Centre, InspiraAlba and the Scottish Refugee Council.



# Refugee Support Workers

- Support Workers play a vital role in ensuring successful integration across Argyll and Bute. Their approach is person-centred, taking into account each individual's culture, language, priorities, and needs.
- No two people receive the same support. The support workers are there from day 1 and communicate regularly with clients to provide support and assistance with welfare and benefits, access to employment, education and English language learning, health services, and housing advice.
- Working closely with a team of community interpreters, the Refugee and UASC Support Workers also ensure that interpretation and translation are available, helping to remove barriers and enable refugees to fully engage with their new communities.



# Housing

- Housing and our Registered Social Landlords are the foundations to successful resettlement in Argyll and Bute.
- Argyll and Bute Council does not have housing. We work with our RSLs who come together under the Home Argyll partnership and have a shared application and allocations policy.
- Argyll and Bute was one of the first local authorities to declare a housing emergency due to increased presentation of homeless post Covid and an increasing lack of housing choice.
- It is important that the arrival of refugees do not add to the current housing pressures.



# Avoiding homelessness

- Refugee support workers discuss housing options and provide information on rights to social housing and benefits as a priority.
- We have arranged information session on housing rights and entitlements jointly led by SRC and the council's Housing team.
- Very few refugees have presented as homeless.
- Temporary homeless accommodation provided could be anywhere in Argyll and Bute. With permanent housing secured through the RSLs.
- We encourage other housing options including the private rental sector. Our Housing Team provides advice and support including assistance with rent deposits.





# Employability

- Our English for Speakers of Other Languages courses are interlinked with our Employability programmes.
- Accredited ESOL provision is delivered by the ESOL tutors within the Resettlement Team linking into local college provision where possible.
- Supporting refugees into meaningful and sustainable employment is a key objective.
- Our ESOL curriculum supports preparedness for work and links into specialist local authority, and third sector delivered employability support and coaching.
- Volunteering and work experience opportunities are tailored to the career ambitions of the individual.

# Business start-ups

- Refugee led business start-ups have become a real success story in Argyll and Bute.
- Business Gateway have played a vital role in this success offering advice and guidance to help refugees navigate the complexities of UK business regulations.
- From cafes and coffee shops to barbershops and car washing, refugee led businesses are now a vibrant part of our High Streets.
- Refugee led businesses also support integration and sharing of culture and traditions.





# Strengthening community cohesion

- We recognise integration is a two-way process. Refugees bring with them languages, global connections, music, games, stories as they set up new homes in Argyll and Bute
- We promote refugee success stories and positive outcomes actively highlighting the positive contributions refugees make to the area.
- Communities across Argyll and Bute are supportive of refugees. Refugees in Argyll and Bute - particularly those who settled on Bute - have received significant media attention both positive and negative.
- We are open and proactive in sharing information with communities whilst preparing for refugees to arrive.
- Seminars have been held to provide elected members with factual information and a clear understanding of our support model. We encourage elected members to be involved in refugee activities.
- A wide range of volunteering opportunities are available to support integration and community engagement.
- We view FOI requests as an opportunity to correct misunderstandings and misinformation.
- And a continuity of management has underpinned our work for over a decade.

# The future

- Argyll and Bute Councils commitment to refugees and asylum seekers is not only a matter of compassion and legal duty. It is an investment in our future. By welcoming those in need, we strengthen our economy, enrich our culture and build more resilient, inclusive communities
- Refugee Resettlement is recognised as a corporate priority of the Council
- The approval of our Refugee and Asylum strategy has reaffirmed our continued participation in the national refugee programmes.





Thank you for  
listening and happy  
to answer any  
questions

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