

Housing Committee Tuesday, 5th December
Safe and Legal Routes to the UK

Data and consultation response

Background

The UK currently operates seven safe and legal routes to refugees. These include resettlement schemes such as the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and Community Sponsorship, as well as bespoke routes for individuals from Afghanistan (ARAP and ACRS), Ukraine (HFU), Hong Kong, and the close family members of refugees. Under the UK’s safe and legal routes, eligible individuals access them through an application or referral process made overseas. This means that when they arrive in the UK their status is already determined.

Previously, the UKRS was known as the VPRS (vulnerable person’s resettlement scheme) which ran from 2015 to 2021 and under which around 20,000 refugees were resettled in the UK.

The data below has been compiled by the Gloucestershire International Resettlement Co-Ordinator for the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership.

Migration and Resettlement Data

Table 1: Stroud Resettlement Data by Year/by Resettlement Cohort by Individual

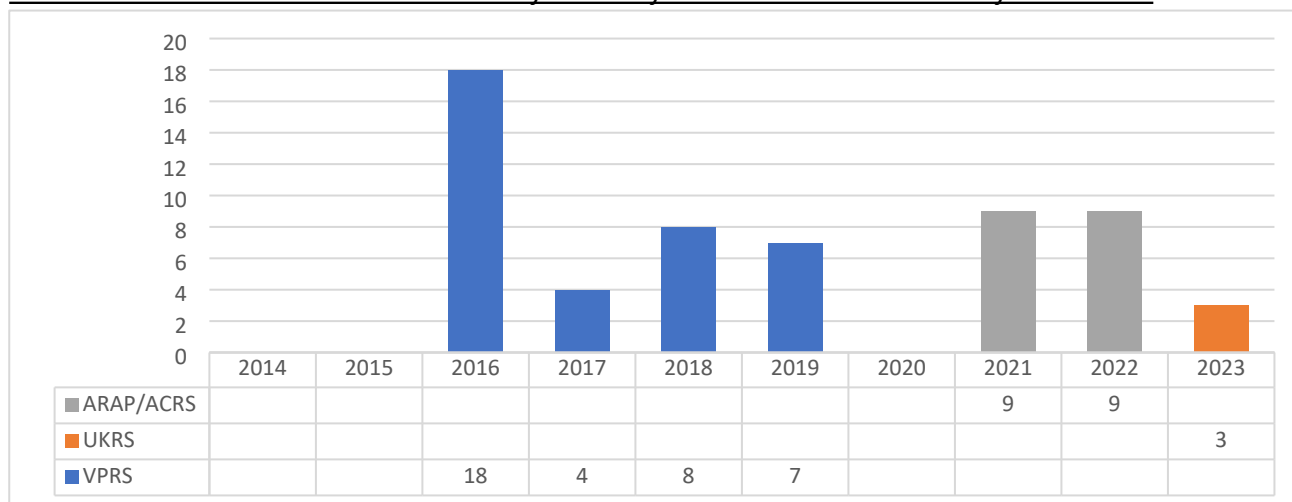


Table 2: Stroud Asylum Data as of 30th September 2023 (by individual)

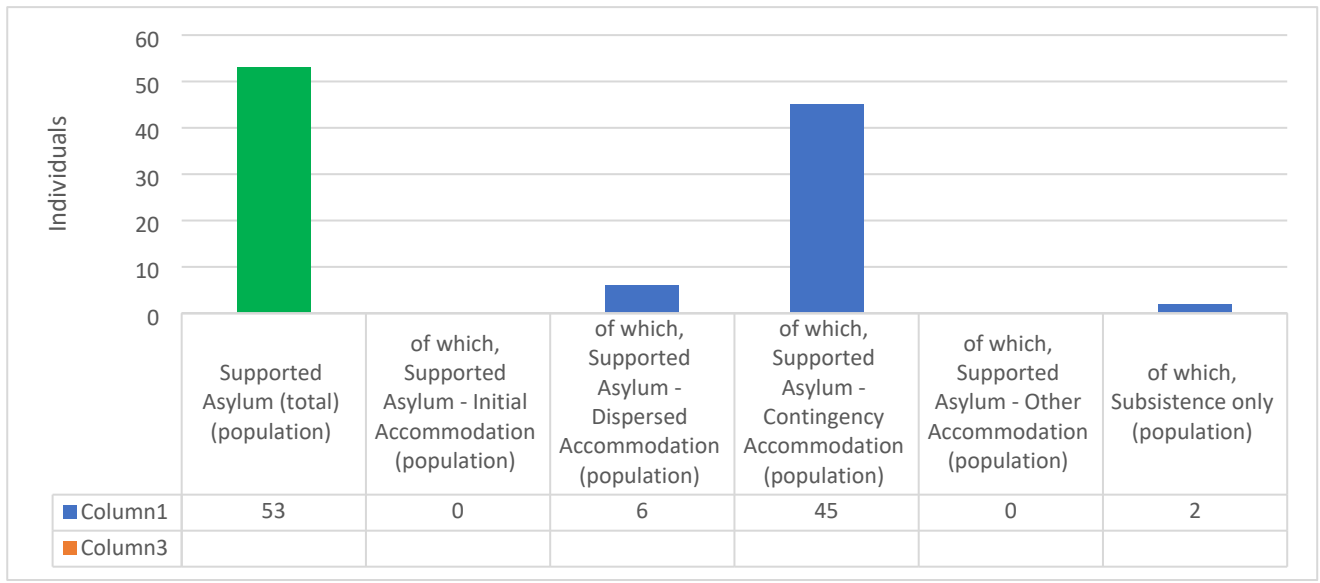


Table 3: Homes for Ukraine (Gloucestershire)

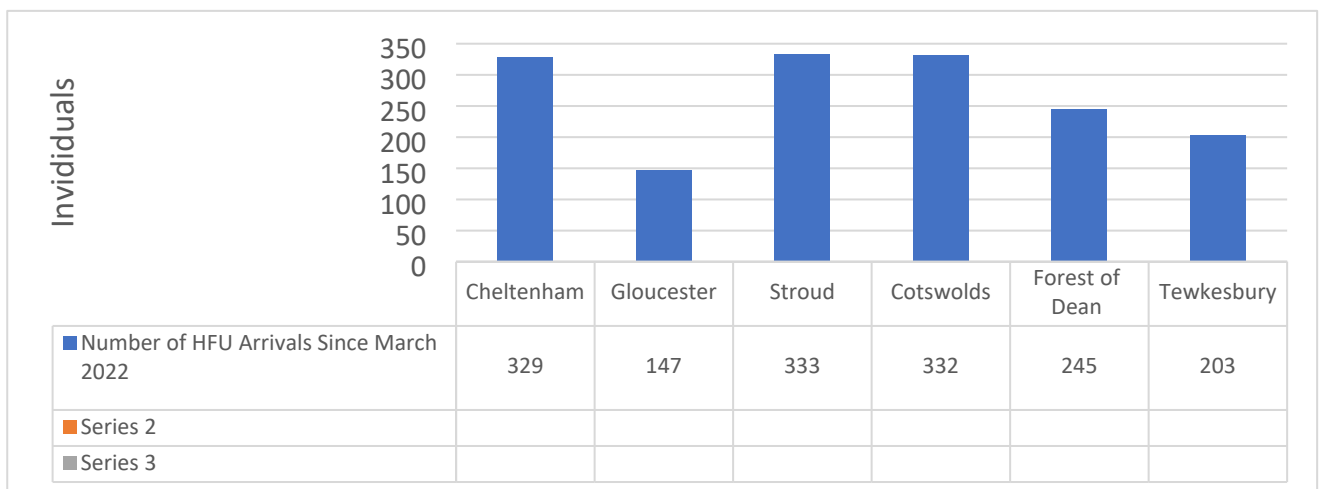


Table 4: Social Housing Demand for Stroud

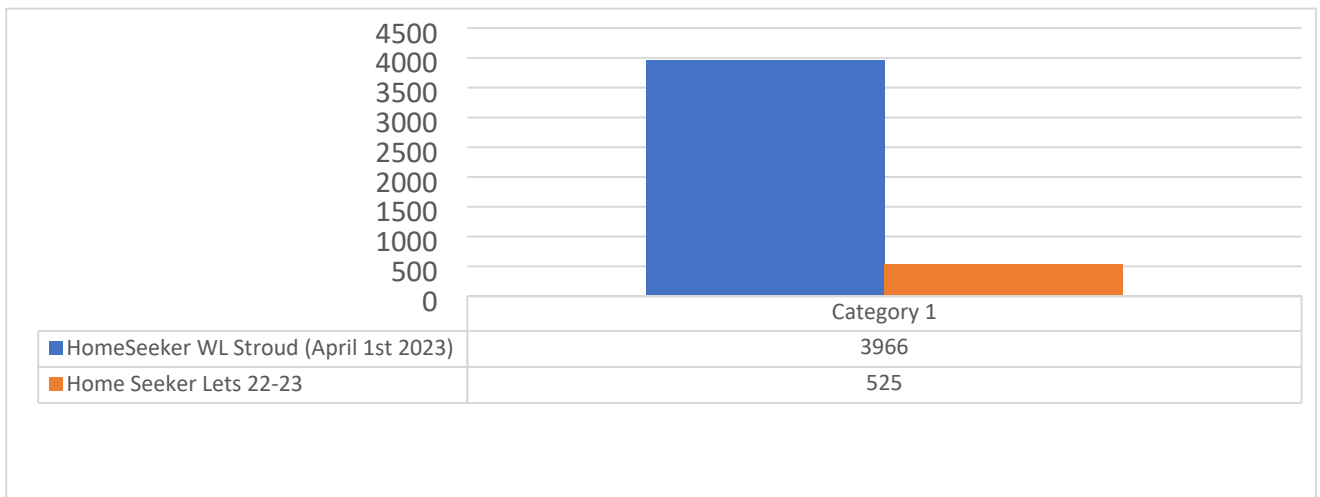
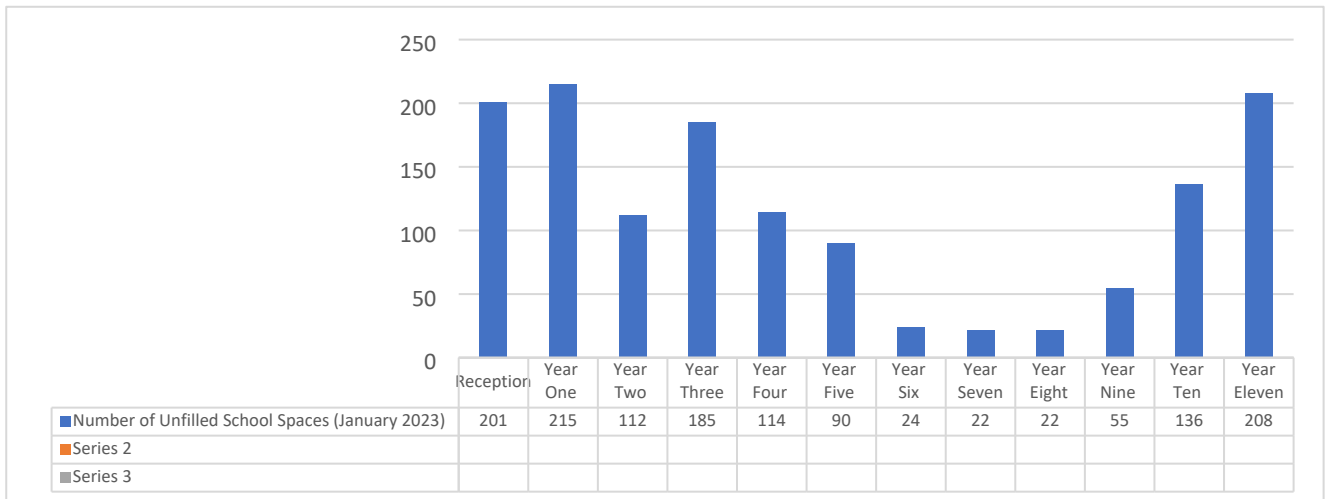


Table 5: Vacant School Places



Healthcare data

There are currently 13 GP practices in the Stroud and Berkley Vale, providing access to a population of 121,529 settled residents.

Community Sponsorship

Stroud currently does not host any Community Sponsorship groups.

Consultation Response (para 2.2 of main Committee report):

- 1) What organisations (including VCS organisations, and community sponsorship groups) in your area have you engaged with while compiling your response and have you included the responses received from these organisations in your local authority consolidated response?**

The consultation was held in partnership with Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership, Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (service provider), Gloucestershire ICB, resettlement leads from across refugee and asylum seeker routes in Gloucestershire, Housing Leads, and the County Council. Stroud does not currently have any Community Sponsorship Groups in the district.

- 2) What is your capacity to house and support those coming through safe and legal routes under the cap in calendar year 2025?**

Stroud District Council is part of the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership, a multi-agency partnership across the County, which works to ensure that refugees are resettled, supported, and integrated into our community. Gloucestershire has welcomed refugees to the county through routes such as Homes for Ukraine, UK Resettlement Scheme, British Nationals (Overseas) and the Afghan Resettlement Schemes. Having analysed data by district however, it is clear to see that the shortage of rented housing in both the private and social sectors has had a direct effect on the numbers of refugees that we are able to support. In addition to this, the current Streamlined Asylum Process policy has increased demand on housing from asylum seekers who have been given leave to remain but insufficient time to find alternative accommodation.

3) What evidence can you provide to support this (for example, number of properties that you have available or can procure)?

We have provided data to demonstrate the current demand vs availability for social housing in Stroud district. In addition to this, we have also provided data demonstrating the high level of support we have given to resettlement routes since 2015.

4) Of the above number, in 2025, how many of the following groups do you anticipate being able to accommodate, and ensure appropriate support is in place for: (Complex cases, single people, large families)

Due to the rurality of Stroud District, we would not anticipate being able to support complex cases or very large families.

5) Of the above number, how many of these do you expect to come through the community sponsorship scheme in your area?

We do not expect arrivals through Community Sponsorship Schemes.

6) The Resettlement Tariff and Community Sponsorship Funding provide the local authority with access to central funding for the purpose of supporting refugee integration. What impact has this funding had on your ability to resettle refugees in your area?

The resettlement tariff has enabled the County to commission GARAS (Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) to provide wraparound support to all our arrivals through resettlement schemes. GARAS provide a thorough wrap-around support package that includes integration, access to English language training, employment, and benefits support. GARAS enable resettlement arrivals to become independent and to integrate well into their communities in the UK.

7) There is no additional funding being introduced with the cap. How could the funding instructions be changed to maximise the existing funding, enabling innovation and increased delivery of services in your area?

We suggest that the ring-fencing of Afghan and UKRS funding is removed. This causes a significant barrier to the provision of services that we could otherwise develop, as we are unable to use funding collectively in a way that would benefit all refugees.

8) What impact do you assess the local provision of public services such as education, social care (adult and children) and healthcare has on your ability to resettle refugees in your area? Why do you assess this to be the case?

Whilst we support the resettlement of refugees, this does place a burden upon services such as education, social care, and healthcare. Stroud has thirteen GP practices to cater to a population of 121,529 and the opening of an Asylum Seeker hotel in 2022, increased pressure on all services. Stroud currently has a Home Seeker registration list of 3966 applications, and we were able to offer lets to 525 households in 22-23. There is an additional demand from HFU arrivals needing to leave their host accommodation and the housing demand resulting

from this. Where HFU guests decide to remain in the district, this again increases the demand on services.

Suggested pledge for 2025 is two properties, with the pledge to be reviewed by this Committee during 2024/25 to determine whether it should be increased.

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