

Supporting Asylum Seekers in Initial Accommodation (IA) in Cornwall

30 November 2022



Devon & Cornwall Refugee Support



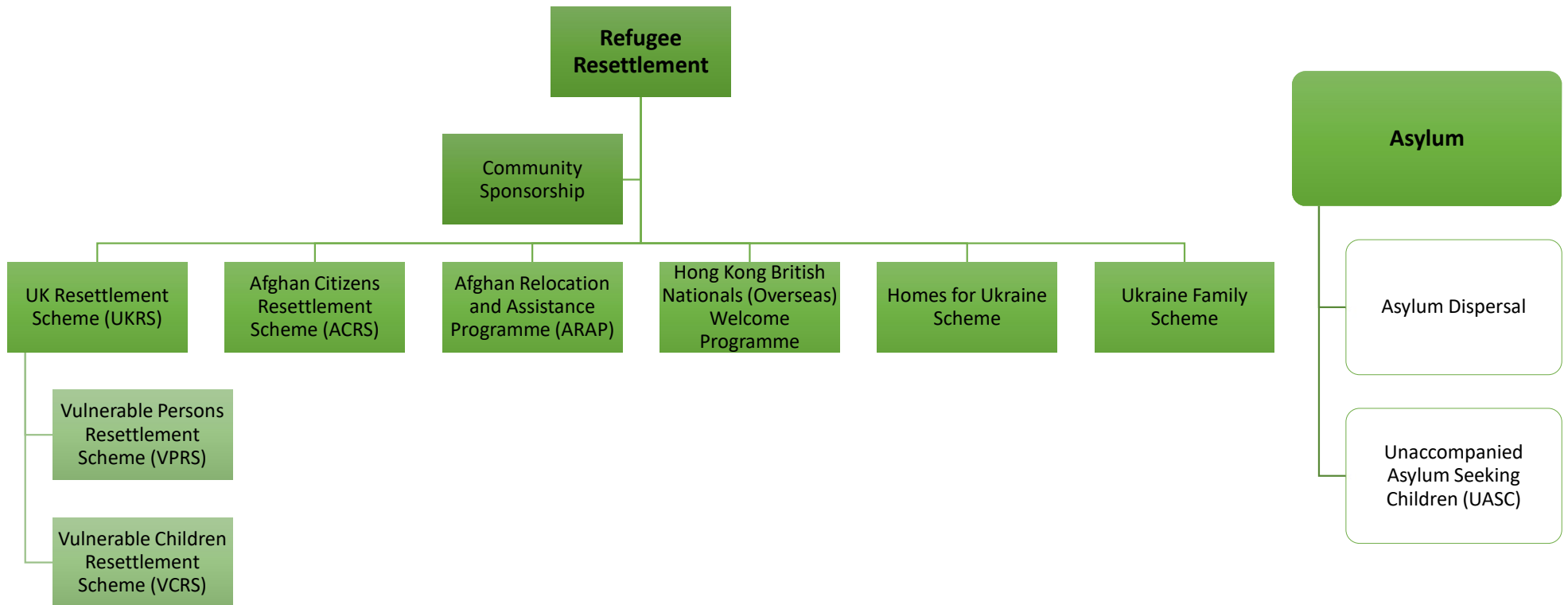
Refugee Support Devon

Why we're here...

- Due to pressure on the nationwide asylum dispersal system, overcrowding and dire conditions in Kent and the recent petrol bomb attack in Dover, the Home Office is dispersing asylum seekers to hotels across the country.
- This includes a hotel in Cornwall. Cornwall has not previously participated in the nationwide dispersal system and has comparatively limited experience with other UK schemes and routes for refugees and asylum seekers.
- More hotels may be 'stood up' in Cornwall in the coming weeks and months. Often very little notice is given, even to the Local Authority in the area where the hotels are located.
- There are a few possible Initial Accommodation (IA) or "Bridging Hotels" that may be acquired by the Home Office in Cornwall, Devon and the wider South West, as well as asylum dispersal properties.
- Local resources designed to support arriving asylum seekers are stretched to capacity. The whole system is under-resourced nationally and local support infrastructure is underprepared for hotels in the South West to be used to house newly arrived asylum seekers. However...
- **Asylum seekers dispersed to the South West should not be disadvantaged due to their dispersal location.**

UK Schemes for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

There are a number of schemes and programmes which form part of the protection and support infrastructure for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, administered by both the Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in partnership with local councils and the voluntary sector:



Resettlement Schemes

Afghan Resettlement under ACRS and ARAP:

- Indefinite Leave to Remain on arrival
- Prior notice and government funding available
- Some housed in hotels

UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS):

- Previously known as VPRS
- Resettles individuals and families registered with UNHCR from countries such as Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon
- Full refugee status for 5 years on arrival
- Right to work and access public funds
- Very unlikely to be housed in hotels

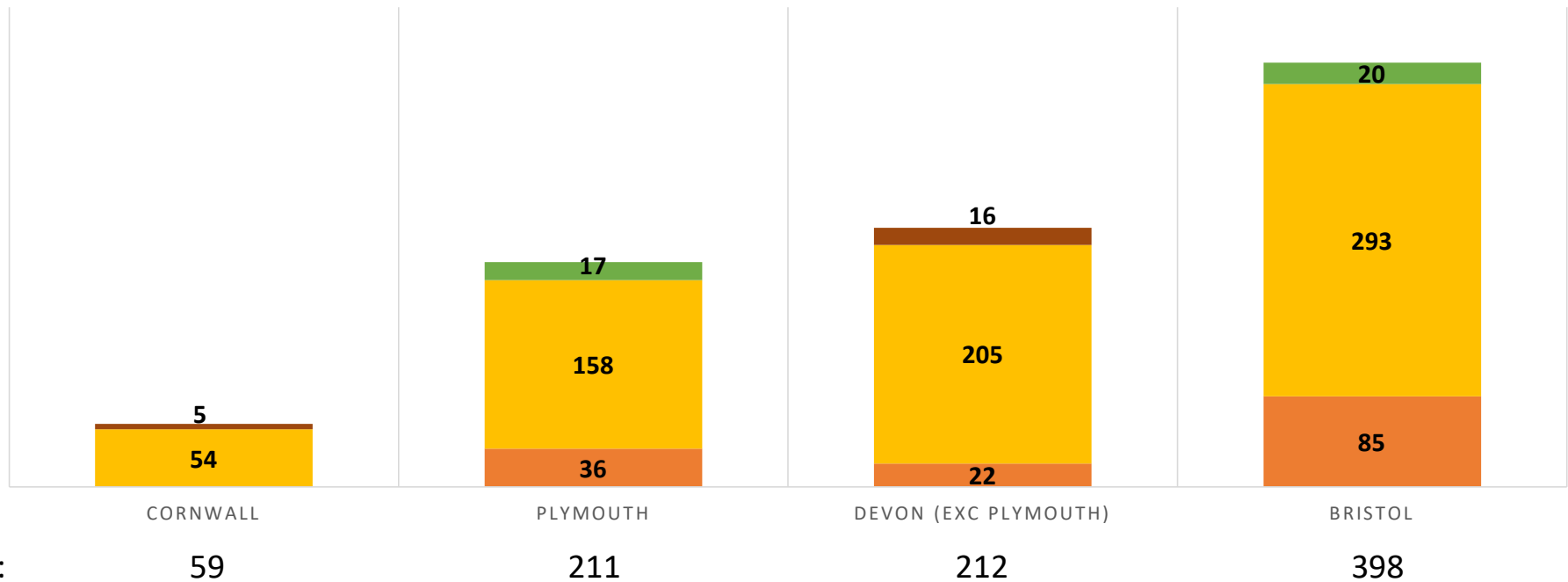
Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Scheme:

- Devon and Cornwall has hosted a disproportionate number of Ukrainian refugees through these schemes

These schemes make up only 11% of those seeking safety in the UK.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE SOUTH WEST JAN 2014 – JUN 2021

VCRS VPRS UKRS CS



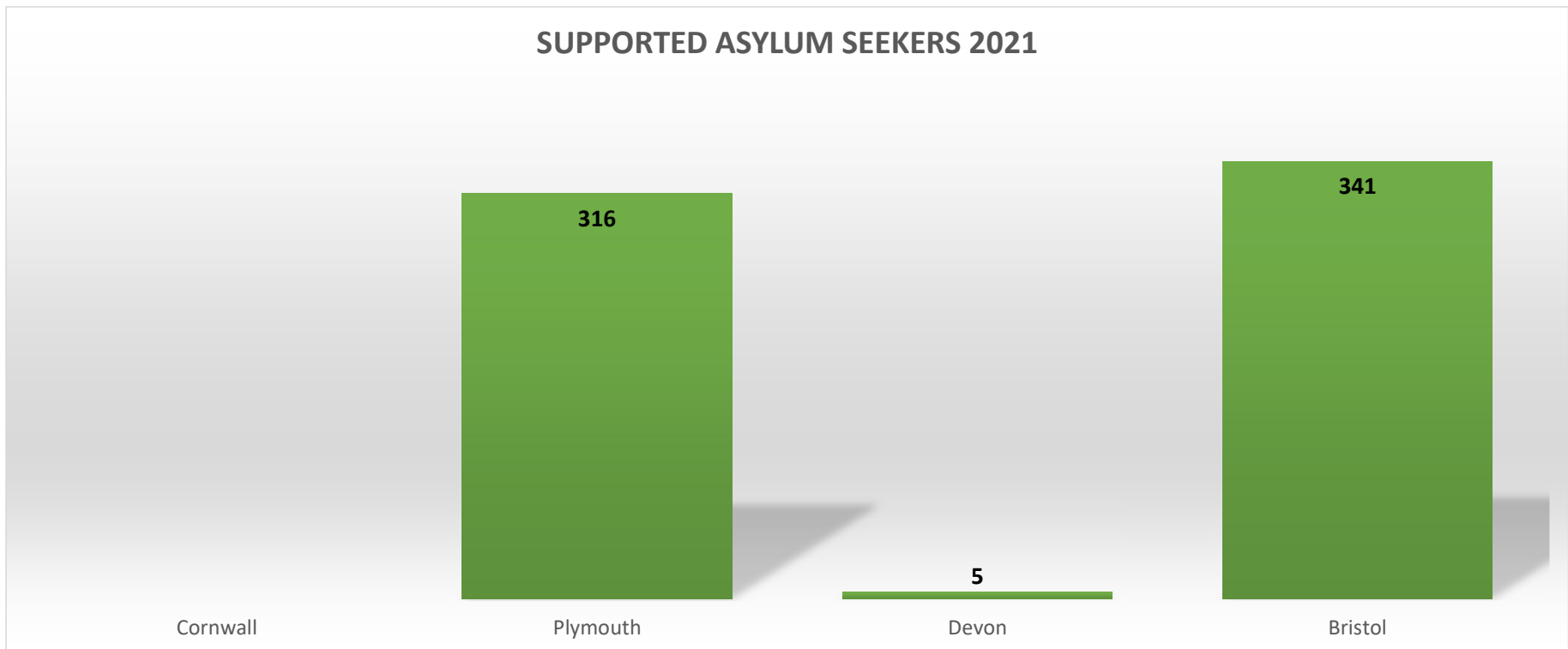
Source: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01403/>

- VCRS: Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme
- VPRS: Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme
- UKRS: UK Resettlement Scheme
- CS: Community Sponsorship Scheme

Claiming Asylum

- The majority of those seeking asylum will be claiming at port of entry and will be classified as **asylum seekers**.
- Asylum seekers have **no right to work** and **no recourse to public funds (NRPF)**.
- Because of the delays in processing asylum claims in recent years, most newly arrived asylum seekers will be placed in **Initial Accommodation (IA)** hotels and camps around the country while they are waiting to have their initial claim for asylum assessed.
- [Home Office rules prevent those living in hotels being served with notices relating to their status](#)

SUPPORTED ASYLUM SEEKERS 2021



Source: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01403/>

* Although there are no asylum seekers recorded as being officially supported by the local authority in Cornwall in 2021, this does not mean that there have never been asylum seekers in the county. Cornwall is not an asylum dispersal area so asylum seekers are not routinely dispersed here, but individuals are not always known to, nor require support from, the local authority. Asylum dispersal centres are cities or areas where asylum seekers are hosted temporarily while their asylum claim is processed and the nearest asylum dispersal area is Plymouth. In January 2022, Cornwall Council announced a scheme to support 108 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs).

Asylum Dispersals

- Claiming asylum is a right secured under the **1951 UN Refugee Convention**.
- The majority of those claiming protection from the UK come through this route.
- From April 2000 **until July 28th 2022**, asylum seekers were dispersed to and housed in selected and designated “dispersal” towns and cities across the UK (e.g. Plymouth).
- **Post-July 2022**, any local authority may now have individual asylum seekers or asylum seeking families dispersed into their area.
- [Clear Springs Ready Homes](#) holds the AASC contract for securing and delivering accommodation for asylum seekers in the South West.



Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

- Children who claim asylum in the UK are taken into the care system and their claim is considered **only after they reach 17.5 years old**.
- The percentage of UASCs who are eventually accepted as refugees and given leave to remain in the UK is **dramatically lower than those who enter the system as adults**, despite a commonly-held perception that claiming to be a child is a way of ‘playing the system’.
- UASCs entering the asylum system are far more likely than adults to eventually be returned to their country of origin.
- Some County and City Councils have come to an agreement to relieve pressure on children’s services in the South East, where most UASCs first present themselves.
- Cornwall Council has agreed to provide accommodation and support for up to **108** UASCs. This number is determined by the Home Office as part of a national allocation scheme.

Initial Accommodation Hotels

- Residents in these hotels probably only arrived in the UK very recently.
- There is no time frame for how long they will be waiting before they are moved on from the IA hotels, or when they are likely to have their initial asylum interview, which is the first step in the asylum process.
- They should have access to **Section 98 support** and be getting around **£8 per week**.
- Food and accommodation is provided by the hotel.
- Asylum seekers have very few entitlements compared to those resettled under the UKRS, Afghan or Ukrainian Schemes.

Who is involved in Initial Accommodation?

- **SBHL** are a hotel management company subcontracted by Clear Springs Ready Homes
- **Migrant Help** is the **Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE)** contract provider, available via phone 24/7



Role of the Voluntary Sector and Specialist Refugee Support Organisations

- The voluntary sector is where much of the experience and knowledge of the asylum support system lies and has proved necessary to provide the **independent oversight** needed.
- Only specialist refugee support organisations with advisors qualified under the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) at Level 1 or higher can give immigration advice.
- Cornwall is a known advice 'desert'.
- **DO NOT GIVE ANY FORM OF IMMIGRATION OR LEGAL ADVICE.**

Role of the Voluntary Sector and Specialist Refugee Support Organisations

- **Why?** Because you are welcoming
- **What?** Help and support
- **HOW?**
 1. By saying “welcome”
 2. By securing asylum seekers’ rights and entitlements and helping them to navigate the important early stages of an adversarial asylum system
 3. To help them get involved in activities that could improve their wellbeing and make them feel welcomed

Learning from Devon's Experience...