

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Children & Families Advisory Panel
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Title:	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Refugees (UASC)
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Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Immigration Minister, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, has recently written to all Council Leaders, Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and the National Transfer Scheme.
- 1.2 In this letter the Minister also outlined the new 'Children at Risk' resettlement scheme where the government has committed to resettle up to 3,000 individuals from the Middle East and North Africa regions. More recently the Lords' amendments to the Immigration Bill, known as the 'Dubs Amendment', have also committed the government to resettle a number of refugee children from refugee camps in Europe.
- 1.3 This report advises on the government National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and refugee children and the implications for Hampshire County Council. The County Council has confirmed to Ministers its support of the National Transfer Scheme. This scheme came into effect from 1 July 2016.

2. Background, context and key facts

- 2.1 There has been a significant increase in the numbers of adults and children claiming asylum in both the UK and across Western Europe as a whole. Some of the countries of origin which have featured regularly in those claiming asylum have been Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Eritrea, and Pakistan. There were 3,043 UASC arrivals in the UK in 2015, a 56% increase since 2014
- 2.2 The national profile of the UASC cohort in 2015 was as follows;

- 62% aged between 16 -17;
- Eritrea was the top nationality followed by Afghanistan and Albania;
- 275 UASC were female;
- 66% of initial decisions taken last year were grants of some sort or leave to remain;
- Nearly all under 16 UASC are fostered. For 16-17 year olds 50% are in semi-independent living arrangements and 50% are fostered.

2.3 UASC are children who have either travelled alone or who have become separated from anyone with parental and/or care responsibility for them. Some of these children will have been trafficked. Children seek asylum because they have a genuine need for protection and are in search of safety.

2.4 They may seek asylum;

- To flee persecution in their home country;
- To flee repression as a minority group in their home country;
- To flee armed conflict in their home country;
- On account of a lack of protection due to human rights violations;
- To escape deprivation and poverty;
- Because they have been trafficked into the UK (for sexual labour or other forms of exploitation) or because they seek to escape trafficking in their home country;
- Children may be fleeing child specific persecution. This could include child soldiering, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

2.5 As well as children arriving in the UK under their own volition, the UK is also being asked to resettle 3,000 refugees - individuals at risk – some of whom may be travelling with children but not a direct relative, as well as resettling a number of unaccompanied children from Europe as part of the Dubs amendment. Local Authorities are being asked to voluntarily, in the first instance, sign up to and commit to the transfer scheme of UASC and refugees between local authorities to share the burden of resources and services. The local authorities in the region need to work together to provide a strong regional co-ordination which can be facilitated by the Strategic Migration Partnerships which currently exist. Hampshire County Council is part of the South East Strategic Migration Partnership.

3. Legislative Framework

3.1 Local Authorities in England and Wales have a duty under Sections 17 and 20 of the Children Act 1989 to provide support to UASC. Section 17 places a general duty on all Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need within their area by providing services appropriate to those children's needs. Section 20 requires every local authority to provide accommodation for children in need within the areas below:

- There is no person who has parental responsibility for them;
- The children have been lost or abandoned.

3.2 The transfer of UASC is sought in the amendments to the Immigration Bill 31 May 2016 which sets out four key provisions that local authorities will have to adhere to:

- Transfer of legal responsibility of UASC from one local authority to another;
- Duty on the local authority to provide information about available services for UASC;
- Obligation on the local authority to set out in writing reasons for not supporting the transfer of children;
- Duty to accept the transfer of relevant children under a mandatory scheme.

4. Transfer and Dispersal Scheme.

4.1 This scheme relates to UASC who are already in the UK, those who continue to arrive in areas of the UK and those children entering the country through the Children at Risk and 'Dubs' amendment programmes. The transfer and dispersal scheme started on 1 July 2016. The principles of the scheme are for it to be:

- Be Fair, equitable and transparent;
- Be voluntary and locally lead;
- Have a distribution based on local authorities' proportion of the total child population (up to 0.07%);
- Build on existing structures and regional models with a phased introduction;
- Support the pooling of knowledge and resources.

4.2 The government will expect each local authority to accept UASC through the national transfer scheme. If a UASC arrives in a local authority with a low concentration of UASC (below 0.07%) the expectation is that the child is cared for by that local authority. If a UASC arrives in a local authority with a high concentration of UASC (over 0.07%) the expectation is that the child will be transferred to an area with lower numbers. Initially, the scheme will look to transfer children within regions but will be mindful if the region has a high concentration of UASC and look to transfer the child to another region. For regions where there is a major port used for entry, UASC are likely to be transferred across regions.

4.3 For UASC who are already settled in the UK, but within local authorities with a high concentration of UASC, (over the 0.07%) children will be allocated to regions. There will be a National Coordination Unit supported by the DfE to support transfers and dispersals. A protocol setting out the details of the national scheme will be available shortly.

5. Funding and placement options

5.1 The same rates of funding will apply to UASC and refugee children regardless of their route in to the UK. From 1 July new national rates for local authorities looking after UASC and refugee children are:

- £41,610 per child per year under 16;
- £33,215 per child per year 16-17;

- £200 per child per week for UASC who qualify for leaving care support.

- 5.2 Whilst this is an increase in the national rates, it falls short of the true cost of care for a child looked after. Each child in care costs on average £50,000 per annum. It is recognised that the true costs are greater but the government's view is that it is making a contribution, not fully funding the scheme; therefore, there will be an additional financial burden on the Local Authority.
- 5.3 The majority of UASC are aged 16+ and currently 34% are in semi-independent living and 62% are in fostering nationally. 2% are in children's homes and 2% are formally 'missing'. There is a presumption by government that the majority of these children aged 16+ would be able to manage and should be living within semi-independent living arrangements and not within foster homes. This will however be dictated by local assessment of individual needs.
- 5.4 There may be the opportunity to seek funding to front load the development of resources.

6. South East Region UASC over view

- 6.1 The South East faces particular challenges because of the number of entry points to the UK. Dover is one of the main routes that UASC arrive into the UK. However, airports such as Heathrow and Gatwick are also known entry points as indeed are the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth. The issues facing Kent have been well publicised as their numbers of UASC have continued to rise month on month. Kent has a disproportionate number of UASC and it is recognised by government that they cannot continue to bear the responsibility for these large numbers indefinitely

With the exception of Kent, no local authority in the south east region has more UASC over their 0.07% ratio of child population to UASC . The south east region is supporting 417 UASC which equates to 0.0265% UASC as a ratio to the child population (excluding Kent).

Max UASC & Refugee Rate =				0.07%
LA	Population aged 0 to 17	Max UASC & Refugee Population	Current UASC Numbers	Percentage of UASC in child pop
South East (excluding Kent)	1575966	1103	417	0.026%
Kent	328,250	230	881	0.2684%
IoW	25,542	18	0	0.0000%
HCC	281,459	197	34	0.0120%
England	11,591,701	8114	3877	0.0334%

6.2

Local Authority	Number of Children	Number of UASC	Percentage of UASC in Child Pop	0.07% of Child Pop	Number to reach 0.07% of Child Pop
South East	1,904,216	1,298	0.0682%	1,333	686
Bracknell Forest	27,823	1	0.0036%	19	18
Brighton and Hove	50,951	25	0.0491%	36	11
Buckinghamshire	118,909	19	0.0160%	83	64
East Sussex	105,392	13	0.0123%	74	61
Hampshire	281,459	34	0.0075%	197	176
Isle of Wight	25,542	0	0.0000%	18	18
Kent	328,250	881	0.2684%	230	0
Medway Towns	62,536	3	0.0048%	44	41
Milton Keynes	65,229	38	0.0583%	46	8
Oxfordshire	141,153	53	0.0375%	99	46
Local Authority	Number of Children	Number of UASC	Percentage of UASC in Child Pop	0.07% of Child Pop	Number to reach 0.07% of Child Pop
Portsmouth	43,360	27	0.0623%	30	3
Reading	35,850	5	0.0139%	25	20
Slough	39,867	8	0.0201%	28	20
Southampton	48,583	4	0.0082%	34	30
Surrey	254,586	124	0.0487%	178	54
West Berkshire	35,631	12	0.0337%	25	13
West Sussex	168,834	55	0.0326%	118	63
Windsor and Maidenhead	33,397	5	0.0150%	23	18
Wokingham	36,864	4	0.0109%	26	22

There is an expectation that local authorities in each region will provide regional co-ordination, in liaison with the national scheme. Regions will have the ability to develop a local methodology for the allocation of children within their area, for those UASC that arrive directly and those that are allocated through the national scheme.

- 6.3 The London authorities have adopted a rota based scheme where each authority takes turns in accepting an UASC. However, this does not consider which ethnic minority/refugee communities local authorities already have and might be better able to integrate newly arrived children into.

7. Impact for Hampshire

- 7.1 As can be seen from the table above, Hampshire has 34 UASC (as of June 2016, this has since increased) and achieving 0.07% would equate to an increase of 163. The current numbers of Children in Care (CiC) in Hampshire are 1333. This increase equates to an additional 12% to the CiC cohort.

Currently Hampshire County Council does not have the capacity to place UASC within foster homes where required, or within semi-independent living arrangements. Therefore any additional placements required would be spot

purchased from private providers. It would be reasonable to assume that the majority of placements offered by private providers would be outside Hampshire which would have an additional impact in relation to social worker support, travel time and expenses.

- 7.2 Hampshire does have some previous experience of UASC and has a work force which is able to undertake age assessments, understand trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation and work with partner agencies, as well evidenced within the Willow Team (child sexual exploitation team). Development work will be required in relation to further strengthening links with relevant faith communities and charities with specialised knowledge and skills, as well as working with health and education partners to provide adequate resources and provision to UASC and refugee children.
- 7.3 Some early preparatory work has already taken place and this includes;
- Working with our South East regional partners to agree we take turns in accepting new arrivals;
 - We have developed an emergency protocol to manage groups of children who come in to the local authority as new arrivals;
 - Identifying foster carers and training them to be able to support the accommodation of UASC out of hours;
 - Working in partnership with Health to review their resources regarding health assessments and how to support foster carers in managing health issues;
 - Worked with Emergency Planning to secure reception centres in emergencies to enable the dispersal of large numbers of UASC;
 - Begun to recruit specifically for foster carers who would care for UASC;
 - Reviewed with neighbouring authorities the provision and capacity of resources to support placement needs of UASC as well as considering the possibilities of joint commissioning;
 - Made contact with charities that specialise in support to UASC and refugees;
 - Made contact with a Boarding school who specialises in the provision of education for UASC and refugee children.

8. UASC Referrals from 1 April to 24 August 2016

- 8.1 There have been 20 UASC referrals received since 1 April. 17 of these remain with in house foster carers. All are male.
- 8.2 Of these seven have been accepted into Hampshire as part of the Child Transfer Scheme. One of these referrals was no longer required to transfer so six remain the responsibility of Hampshire.
- 8.3 All have been placed into foster care, five with independent fostering agencies and one with in house foster carers. One tried a post-16 provision but was unable to cope with the placement and was moved to a foster placement.
- 8.4 The general details of the children are summarised below:

9 UASC through Child Transfer Scheme

Age	Number Transferred
13	1
14	0
15	0
16	3
17	2

Country of Origin	Number Transferred
Ethiopia	1
Syria	1
Eritrea	1
Iraq	1
Egypt	1
Afghanistan	1

10. UASC arriving directly into Hampshire

- 10.1 There are a further 11 young people of 13 in Hampshire's care who have arrived directly since April. Two were age assessed as over 18.
- 10.2 Nine have been placed into foster care, seven with independent fostering agencies and two in house. Two are placed with post-16 provision.
- 10.3 The ages of those arriving in this way are much more varied:

Age	Number
13	2
14	1
15	3
16	1
17	4
Country of Origin	Number
Ethiopia	1
Vietnam	1
Eritrea	2
Sudan	1
Egypt	1
Afghanistan	7

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 It is evident that the numbers of UASC will increase for all Local Authorities across the country. Despite the National Transfer Scheme being in its early stages, Hampshire County Council has responded proactively in receiving UASC as part of the scheme.
- 11.2 The Children and Advisory Panel are asked to note the contents of this report and the implications of the National Transfer Scheme.

12. Recommendation

- 12.1 That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the contents of the report and the conclusions reached.