



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Young People's Scrutiny Committee
23 May 2016 10.00am

<u>Item</u>
<b>10</b>
<u>Public</u>

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the current position and levels of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Shropshire social services care.
- 1.2 The report includes Shropshire's involvement with the Kent Dispersal scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and the recent announcement regarding the dispersal from Europe.
- 1.3 The report will include Shropshire Children's Services involvement on the Refugee Operational Group and Refugee cross party working group.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The members of the panel are asked to note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Members are asked to comment on the current situation in regards to the placement of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and consider the support and infrastructure requirements to meet the needs of children in Shropshire.

## **REPORT**

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

(NB this will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

### **4. Financial Implications**

This report will present information which will support decision making for the future developments in the National dispersal scheme and Kent dispersal scheme. Accountable officers, senior manager and key decision makers may use the information to inform actions or interventions for the prioritisation and use of resources. Any financial implications will need to be set against the funding arrangements for 2016/17 in respect of local authority costs for supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children and former UASC care leavers.

As local authorities enter into the National Transfer of UASC and refugee children there will be a financial implication due to the cost of the placements, and social work support. See Appendix 1 for the average costs of providing a placement for the child or young person. However this will not take into account the costings for education, health and social work support.

The Minister of Immigration has recently been in contact with Local Authorities to report that all existing rates for UASC's and eligible care leavers, including the rates offered to local authorities willing to accept the transfer of UASC from Kent will continue until a new national transfer scheme is introduced. The current daily rate for UASC under the age of 16 is £95, and the daily rate for UASC aged 16-17 is £71. At the end of the financial year Shropshire has also made financial claims to Central Government to cover the cost implications attached to social work salaries, administration costs, buildings costs and corporate recharge.

### **5. Background**

There has been a significant increase in the number of adults and children claiming asylum in both the UK and Europe as a whole. Some of the countries of origin which have featured regularly in persons claiming asylum have been Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Eritrea, and Pakistan. Since 2015 there have been significant increases in the number of applications from Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

We have all seen scenes of adults who have had to make traumatic and difficult journeys from their home countries to seek safety. However in amongst these adults and families have been children who have either travelled alone or have become separated from anyone with parental or care responsibility for them. These are the children and Young People who are described as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Children seek asylum because they have a genuine need for protection and are in search of safety. 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.
- Some children seek asylum in the UK either 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.
- As well as being subject to persecution for the same reasons as adults in their country, children may be fleeing child-specific persecution. This could include child soldiering, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Local Authorities in England and Wales have a duty under Sections 17 and 20 of the Children Act 1989 to provide support for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Section 17 places a general duty on every Local Authority 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 their area who require accommodation if:

- there is no person who has parental responsibility for them;
- the children have been lost or abandoned

## **5.1 Introduction**

In Shropshire for each Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child that presents in the county, there is an immediate need to identify a social worker (and an interpreter if required) who can meet the child and conduct an initial safeguarding and wellbeing assessment. This initial assessment includes making a considered judgement on signs which may indicate for instance that

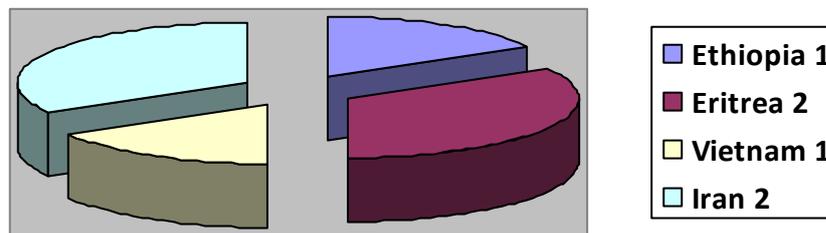
a young person is a different age to that claimed and/or signs that a child may have been trafficked, exploited or harmed. A bed must also be identified in an age-appropriate setting; however temporary, it must be available immediately.

[Care of unaccompanied and trafficked children: Statutory guidance for local authorities on the care of unaccompanied asylum seeking and trafficked children \(2014\)](#) provides that where the age of a person is uncertain and there are reasons to believe that they are a child, they are presumed to be a child in order to receive immediate access to assistance, support and protection in accordance with Article 10(3) of the European Convention on action Against Trafficking in Human Beings. Age assessments should only be carried out where there is significant reason to doubt that the claimant is a child. Age assessments should not be a routine part of a local authority's assessment of unaccompanied or trafficked children

In Shropshire the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has historically been and is low. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 Shropshire accommodated 3 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who were assessed and provided with accommodation and Looked After Children services under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 a further 3 young people claiming to be UASC have been provided with either Fostering or Supported Board and Lodgings placements.

In March 2016 a previous male UASC has turned 18 but remains in supported Board and Lodgings.

UASC Country of Origin since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016



**5.2** Alongside work nationally to progress a national dispersal scheme and following discussion with the Department for Education, Kent County Council's Corporate Director for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing sent a letter to all Directors of Children's Social Services in England requesting urgent support under Section 27 of the Children Act 1989.

Section 27 (2) states:

*“An authority whose help is so requested shall comply with the request if it is compatible with their own statutory or other duties and obligations and does not unduly prejudice the discharge of any of their functions”.*

- 5.3** Due to the overwhelming influx of refugees and UASC that have arrived in Kent and in order to support the above request, Shropshire’s Children’s Services are currently involved with the Kent dispersal scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. We have received 5 referrals to consider under this arrangement. All have been deliberated with a focus on the needs of the child. All referrals have been for male UASC aged 16+. We are currently making arrangements for one male UASC from Kent to be transferred to Supported Board and Lodgings provision. We continue to have regular dialogue with Kent officers to identify appropriate young people to relocate to Shropshire. We have committed to accepting 3 UASC from the Kent dispersal scheme.
- 5.3** Shropshire Children’s Services currently have 2 representatives on the Refugee Operational Group and Refugee cross party working group to advise and contribute to the Syrian Refugee dispersal scheme. Our role within the group is to liaise with appropriate agencies who may be able to offer universal support to refugee families with children, to provide updates on our contribution to placing UASC’s and contribute with appropriate safeguarding and legislative advice. However at the present time none of our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are from Syria.
- 5.4** The government has made an intention to begin resettling unaccompanied Syrian children from other European countries in the UK and initiating a UASC dispersal scheme. However the government has not yet committed to a final figure as the exact numbers must be agreed in partnership with local authorities. Shropshire will be required to provide information to Central Government on what level of support we will be able to give and what kind of assistance the local authority will need in order to do this. Average costs for placing a UASC has been attached (appendix 1) to give guidance on the potential financial impact upon children’s services. However these costings do not take into account the support needed from social workers, education or health services.
- 5.5** The Immigration Minister has recently been in contact with Local Authorities to report that the Government intend for the first phase of the National Transfer Scheme to be in place by July 2016.

## 6. Additional Information

- 6.1** In accordance with legislation, statutory guidance, and Shropshire Council's vision for children, our approach is that Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are entitled to the same quality of services as children normally resident within the boundaries of the county. They are seen as children first and foremost, vulnerable and in need of care, protection and encouragement.
- 6.2** A range of provision is and will continue to be utilised to provide appropriate accommodation options including foster care and Supported Board and Lodgings (a semi independence post 16 family based accommodation provision which is funded and managed by Shropshire Council).

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/11309/LGA+Briefing+Unaccompanied+children/>

[Cabinet Report 16.03.16 The provision and Support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#)

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)**

**David Minnery**

**Local Member**

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 Basic Costs of Placing an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking child (based on a child aged 16+).

## Appendix 1

### **Basic Costs of Placing an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking child, based on a child aged 16+.**

I have based this on a child aged 16+ as this is the age of child that has been directed towards us by the Kent dispersal scheme.

The cost of the social work time, mileage and education transport costs have not been included but can be provided if required.

	In House Foster Care per week (Average cost)	SBL per week (up to 18)	Independent Fostering Agency (Average cost)	Independent Residential (Minimum)
<b>Total per week</b>	<b>361.44</b>	<b>£195.00</b>	<b>£850.00</b>	<b>£2450.00</b>
<b>Total per month</b>	<b>1445.76</b>	<b>£780.00</b>	<b>£3400.00</b>	<b>£9800.00</b>
<b>One off payments</b>				
Birthday Allowance	£ 74.00	£74.00		
Festival Allowance	£ 68.00	£68.00		
Initial Clothing	£200.00	£50.00		
Holiday Allowance	£300.00	£140.00		
<b>Total one off payments</b>	<b>£642.00</b>	<b>£332.00</b>		