



<u>Committee and Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Cabinet	
28 September 2016	<u>Public</u>

## **Progress and update report on the provision and support to Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children In Shropshire**

### **Responsible Officer**

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This report sets out the updated position regarding the support being provided to refugees in Shropshire. It also provides a brief further update on asylum seekers and a more comprehensive view and the position in Shropshire on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC).

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 As has been previously reported a Cross Party Working Group has been established in Shropshire to respond to the UK Government response to the repatriation scheme for Syrian refugees, as supported by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). This group has been established since October 2016 and continues to meet on a regular basis. The groups remit has also expanded to include Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC). The cross party working group is regularly updated by an operational group of officers from across the Council and partner agencies who together are managing the repatriation of refugee families to Shropshire.
- 1.2 The operational group consists of officers from both children and adult social care services, education and early years, housing and benefits advice. Partners from other agencies include Shropshire CCG, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, West Mercia Police Authority and Refugee Action.
- 1.3 Again as previously reported additional requests are being made of local authorities in different ways. Previously Cabinet were informed that there were potentially four different cohorts of people that may need support in Shropshire. These were:
  - Refugees under the UNHCR Syrian resettlement programme
  - Asylum seekers
  - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) dispersed from Kent County Council

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) currently in Europe.

However there is now an emerging 5<sup>th</sup> cohort, albeit small at present, of unaccompanied asylum seeker children arriving on their own in Shropshire and typically being identified by police at service stations or in the local community.

## **2. Recommendations**

- a) That Cabinet confirm their ongoing commitment to providing support, as appropriate, to Syrian Refugees and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children and note the further update regarding the Asylum Dispersal Scheme
- b) That Cabinet agree to Shropshire supporting up to a further 5 Syrian refugee families under the Syrian repatriation programme managed by UNHCR to take the total cohort in Shropshire up to 15 families over the next 12 months, or around 60 or so people, dependent on family size.
- c) That Cabinet agree to participate in the UASC dispersal scheme on a voluntary basis to reach the 0.07% of our total child population. This will include assisting Kent with their challenge of supporting up to 2000 children that have arrived there as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children, and future requests to support UASC and refugees from Europe when further clarity is provided on the position regarding how the dispersal scheme will operate, and that delegated responsibility is allocated to the Director for Children and Young Peoples Services to agree any requests for support and to ensure that appropriate staffing resources are in place.
- d) That Cabinet note the number of UASC already supported in Shropshire which will contribute to the overall total required under the UASC national dispersal scheme.
- e) That cabinet note the need to undertake a further recruitment drive for supported accommodation for UASC.
- f) That Cabinet agree to any further funding being made available for the resettlement of Syrian Refugees through extension of the scheme being ringfenced within a dedicated cost centre in adult social care to provide support to this group of people over the 5 year term of the funding.
- g) That Cabinet agree to the funding being made available to support the UASC dispersal scheme being ring fenced within a dedicated cost centre within Children's services.

# REPORT

## 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

### Equalities and Human Rights

- 3.1 Support to refugees and asylum seekers of all ages is a National and International challenge to assist people displaced through war and conflict in their home countries.
- 3.2 The Government have established a number of schemes, or have pledged support, to assist this process including establishing a national dispersal scheme for asylum seekers, a national dispersal scheme for UASC and participation in the UNHCR Repatriation Scheme for Syrian refugees.
- 3.3 The Government through the Immigration Act 2016 have established national dispersal schemes for asylum seekers and unaccompanied asylum seeker children. Participation by local authorities is currently voluntary but the new Act does allow for authorities be mandated to participate in these national dispersal schemes.
- 3.4 The [Immigration Act 2016](#) will also introduce new sanctions on illegal workers and rogue employers, provide better co-ordination of regulators that enforce workers' rights, prevent illegal migrants in the UK from accessing housing, driving licenses and bank accounts and introduce new measures to make it easier to enforce immigration laws and remove illegal migrants

#### a) Refugees

The UK has agreed to support 20,000 Syrian refugees through the UNHCR Repatriation Scheme to relocate to the UK on a 5 year Humanitarian Visa. This status as a refugee enables the individual to have access to housing, welfare benefits, health, education and to be able to work in paid employment.

Further to previous approval by Cabinet to support 10 families, Shropshire Council have to date accepted 8 Syrian refugee families into Shropshire. In total 16 adults and 17 children have settled here from 2 arrival flights over the summer.

A diversity day held in Shrewsbury on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2016 was attended by Refugee Action the support provider commissioned by the Council to provide support to refugee families in Shropshire. Refugee Action received many offers of voluntary support and good wishes and welcome remarks, the latter of which have been recorded on "luggage labels" as illustrated in Appendix A.

The national context and progress to date in relation the UNHCR scheme is illustrated in an infographic attached at Appendix B.

## b) Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers would be supported through a regional contract commissioned by Central Government as part of the National Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

Shropshire is not currently part of this scheme and although there is growing pressure from the regional authorities in the West Midlands that the dispersal should be more equally shared across all local authorities it is possible that by committing to supporting refugees that Shropshire would not be mandated to accept asylum seekers.

## c) Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children (UASC)

The crisis in Syria and events in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond have seen unprecedented number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Europe. Some have gone on to reach the UK via Northern France, including many unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). Other children are still in the Middle East or North Africa or are in Europe and the Government has committed to resettle a number of these vulnerable children.

The Government has therefore introduced a national transfer scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, and sets out its expectations that all local authorities join the transfer scheme and that this will be coordinated by the West Midlands Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP). The Government expects Local Authorities to support the scheme voluntarily, but there is the ability under the Immigration Act to mandate Local Authorities to participate.

The scheme sets out a distribution of UASC based on 0.07% proportion of the total child population, and for Shropshire that means we will be expected to receive some 42 children and young people in total into the care of the Local Authority. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children are treated as Looked After Children (LAC) and are entitled to access services and education as UK Looked After Children.

A small number of UASC are currently being supported in Shropshire. At the point of writing we have received 2 young men from Kent as part of our commitment to support Kent in their transfer scheme, and 5 young men have presented in County through their own means, although one is now 18.

Under the transfer protocol we are required to ascertain to the best of our efforts that children presenting are age assessed as being children.

The majority of the children placed or arriving here are young males aged 16/ 17 year olds, for whom independent lodging or supported lodgings is the most appropriate accommodation. It has been challenging to match some of the children and young people with appropriate supportive and experienced providers, and particularly with an appropriate faith.

The cultural match presents a real issue for Shropshire, and it has been necessary to place children outside of the County in order to meet their cultural and indeed social needs. Experience to date would suggest that whilst some of these children settle well, some do not, preferring to relocate themselves to big cities particularly but not exclusively, London where their cultural and religious needs and social aspirations can be met.

By way of further example, we agreed to receive children from Kent who ultimately did not transfer to our care because they did not wish to come to Shropshire, and so have remained in Kent. Dealing with the challenges that some of these young people present does take up a great deal of social worker time, and is very testing for our SBL providers.

Under the national dispersal scheme, it may be that we receive younger children, and this will need to be ascertained in dialogue with the WMSMP.

Whilst it is perhaps too early to establish fully, it does appear that some children will have additional needs which will require specialist input from other sectors including health/mental health.

Further guidance on how the National Dispersal Scheme will work in detail is still awaited and we are working with both the West Midlands Region and the Regional West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP) to understand more fully when and at what rate children might be expected to move into Shropshire.

The range of available accommodation provision is one of the biggest issues that needs addressing. We are working closely with our Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Company to try to attract new foster carers and supported based lodging providers as part of our normal recruitment drive but further targeted marketing will be required to expand our internal resource. The fostering service team is linking with authorities across the West Midlands to explore further options that may be transferable to Shropshire.

### **Engagement and Consultation**

- 3.4 The West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP) are co-ordinating the acceptance of Syrian refugees to the West Midlands and maintaining regular contact with the Home Office.
- 3.5 The WMSMP have now held three engagement events with West Midlands local authorities and officers and Councillors from Shropshire Council have attended these. These have related to the Syrian refugees

repatriation scheme, the asylum dispersal scheme and most recently on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children.

- 3.6 In addition the Children's regional ADCS group have established a work stream to ensure some coordination across the West midlands and are working with the Strategic Migration Partnership who have just appointed a coordinator for the dispersal of children and young people.
- 3.7 Regionally the WMSMP issue a regular monthly newsletter with latest information and updates which is proving to be very helpful.
- 3.8 The Home Office have also established a monitoring and evaluation programme for the resettlement of Syrian refugees which requires regular updates by the Council at predetermined dates linked to the date of arrival relating to accommodation, employment, school enrolment and health and wellbeing. These returns are collated by the Council in conjunction with the support provider and CCG and submitted via the Home Office Moveit portal.
- 3.9 Shropshire has maintained a continual dialogue with local citizens regarding refugees and asylum seekers through its web site <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/syrian-refugee-support/> and is now part of a home office pilot of web based programme on co-ordinating offers of support through a national web portal. This is still in its early stages of development but it has the potential to improve engagement with the public who wish to offer local support and assist the local authority in seeking specific support such as rented accommodation or volunteers to assist with conversation practice and other English language skills for example.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

##### Refugees

- 4.1 The Government is providing funding to Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to support the 5 year resettlement programme through the overseas aid budget and other funding streams.
- 4.2 Local Authorities are expected to use this funding to provide meet and greet support at the airport of arrival, appropriate housing, and 12 months of support, interpretation and translation services and English language classes. The funding is also to be used to meet any non-complex social care needs.
- 4.3 Financial returns are submitted at predetermined intervals relative to an arrival date on pre-determined template and uploaded via the Home Office portal Moveit.
- 4.4 Earlier this month central Government announced additional funds being made available to each local authority participating the UNHCR Syrian refugee repatriation scheme for the provision of additional English

language support tuition through ESOL. Shropshire should qualify for this and we are waiting for the financial details.

- 4.5 The costs associated with the repatriation of Syrian refugees to Shropshire are being carefully monitored against the support contract and the funds received. There is the potential to achieve better value from the support contract and a reduced unit cost per family supported if the number of refugee families that Shropshire accepted were to increase to 15. This approach would enable more people to be supported and provide the opportunity to target funds to specific support areas such as fast track language skills or more bespoke support to help refugees into paid employment.

#### Asylum Seekers

- 4.6 There is no additional funding support for Local Authorities. Should the Asylum Dispersal scheme be extended to Shropshire it will be important that we have absolute clarity on what the appointed provider should be providing under their contract.

#### UASC

- 4.7 Payment for each eligible UASC will be at the rates set out in the table below. A “legacy” case is a UASC who entered the UK on or before 30 June 2016 and who has not been transferred to the care of another local authority from local authorities accepted by the Home Office as being significantly above the 0.07% ceiling as at 1 July 2016.

Category	£ daily	£weekly
Legacy case aged under 16	£95.00	£665.00
Legacy case aged 16 or 17	£71.00	£497.00
Other case aged under 16	£114.00	£798.00
Other case aged 16 or 17	£91.00	£728.00

**NB** (Legacy = entry pre 1st July 2016)

- 4.8 If a local authority’s actual expenditure (for all eligible UASC supported) is less than a sum calculated by applying the rates in the table, payments will be capped at the level of actual expenditure.

Placement Type	£ weekly
Supported Board and Lodgings (additional needs can attract an additional £100 per week)	£195.00 \ £295.00
Internal Fostering	£ 317.58(level 2 11-15) - 361.44 (level 2, 16+) Average £339.51
External Fostering	£ 805.00 average (15+)
Internal Residential	£ 2200
External Residential	£ 2500-3000
SHIP (Supported Housing Independence Project)	£ 215.00 per week

SAIL (Supported Accommodation and Independent Living)	£ 700.00 – £1000.00
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The costing above does not take into account the finances to cover:

- Reasonable travel expenses such as travel to church/Mosque
- Travel to college, education
- Educational/communication equipment (Laptop, tablet)
- Translation services
- Transport and support at Home Office interviews
- Social Work time
- Weekly Pocket Money £15, Clothing allowance £10. Per week

4.9 Each UASC, based on the age of the current cohort (16+) could attract £637.00 (£91.00 x 7) per week and **£33,215.00 per annum** (£91.00 x 365). The rate is capped at the amount spent with an expectation to return any unused funds to central government. There is an auditable financial return that is required by central government to account for actual spend. In essence, we can draw down the full funding cost available so long as we can demonstrate the actual spend and meet certain relevant direct support cost expenditure criteria:

- Relevant expenditure may include the provision of accommodation and board where the local authority has a duty to carry out an assessment of need and to accommodate a UASC or is accommodating a UASC as a result of a care order (including an interim care order), and the child is accommodated by the Local Authority with a foster carer, community or children's home or children's home or
- For a young person aged 16 or 17 maintaining the young person in suitable supported lodgings or independent accommodation or
- The local authority has a duty to carry out an assessment of need and to provide a range of services appropriate to UASC needs where a young person aged 16 or 17 has been assessed to be a child in need and the young person is provided with support.
- Plus: Reasonable travelling expenses to enable the child (UASC) to attend a hearing of an appeal on his/her claim for asylum or an interview in connection with his/her claim for asylum which has been requested by the Secretary of State.

4.10 Given that we are expected to receive approximately 35 new UASC as part of the national transfer protocol and predictive forecasting suggests that if we receive the full amount for a UASC aged 16+ we can assume that based on 10 UASC transfers from other Local Authorities per year for the next 3 years aged 16+ on entry to Shropshire we could claim up to a maximum of £33,215 x 30 = £996,450.

£563,846.40 (£361.44 x 52 weeks x30 children) of this total would account for the medium range accommodation option (level 2 foster care). Placement costs will fluctuate depending on availability, needs of the child and skills of potential carers.

The rate allowed for Social Work time across this cohort would equate to an additional 153,300.00 (£14.00 daily x 365 x 30) which would allow us the option to establish a dedicated Social Work post x 2, with a case load of 20 asylum seeking children each, and support worker post, to work across the entire cohort.

- 4.11 For UASCs who are eligible for leaving care support they will attract a fee of £200.00 per week to be drawn down from central government to aid with leaving care costs. This will not cover the total costs for accommodation and living expenses if the UASC post 18 is not in receipt of benefits or work. It also needs to be born mind that where a UASC achieves eligible leaving care status there is also a discretionary leaving care grant, up to £2,000.00 which is available to all eligible care leavers. Not all UASCs will be eligible for Leaving Care Services but this is only the case for those UASC's who have had their asylum application denied.

## **5. Background**

### Syrian Refugees

- 5.1 The first 5 families arrived in Shropshire in June and are settling in well. They are being supported by Refugee Action, the British Red Cross and local volunteers. The support has been commissioned by Shropshire Council and is funded through a grant from Central Government. Housing has been sourced from the private rented sector with no reliance on social housing. Furniture and fittings have been supplied through Revive and is the equivalent to the basic furniture pack provided through benefits support.
- 5.2 The Refugees are accessing college course to learn English, again funded through the Government grant and two are volunteering for a local furniture charity.
- 5.3 A women's group has been established which includes a sewing group making items which are being donated for sale to a local charity shop.
- 5.4 Local volunteer organisations have played a big part in supporting these families to settle, from sourcing Halal meat suppliers to contacting Rotary International who have kindly donated a television to each family.
- 5.5 A second cohort of three families arrived in August. They are being supported in the same way through Refugee Action and links are being developed with local voluntary support groups to replicate the support that was provided to the first arrivals. This second cohort of arrivals are again

being accommodated in private sector housing and have received the same basic furniture pack from Revive.

- 5.6 At the time of writing this report the children of school age are experiencing their first weeks at school. It is too early to report on how this is progressing, however all the children of school age have been allocated a place in their local primary or secondary school. One young person is accessing a preparing for employment college course with additional English language components to assist him in securing an apprenticeship.
- 5.7 Local library services have provided activities over the summer which have include Arabic and English storytelling sessions. It is hoped that these will continue.
- 5.8 West Mercia Police and Shropshire Fire and Rescue services have met with all the families as part of their orientation into their local communities and this has been well received.
- 5.9 Shropshire CCG have arranged registration for all the arrivals at local GP practices. An information leaflet on the NHS translated into Arabic has been provided. All arrivals have accessed an initial health check and all have been provided with a locally developed card that can be used to request interpretation services when accessing health services. To date social care services have not been required although this could change in the future.
- 5.10 Biometric Resident Permits (BRP's) are provided to the Local Authority as the named responsible contact and are then issued via Refugee Action to the Syrian families.
- 5.11 All the individuals have received their BRP's with the exception of 2 babies who had to submit new photographs. The Council has followed the required process to arrange for the issue of new BRP's .The parents of these children, with the support of Refugee Action are in the final stages of completing this process by accessing a designated Crown Post Office (Liverpool or Birmingham) for the final validation.

#### Asylum Dispersal

- 5.12 This was set out in a letter to the Authority on 24 August 2015. This is a separate area to Syrian refugee resettlement.
- 5.13 Asylum dispersal is supported by the Government through the appointment of regional providers. To put Asylum seeking into context the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999, and its provisions, was introduced with the intention of sharing the impact of dispersals of asylum seekers across the UK and to ease the over reliance on any one area.
- 5.14 The Home Office have instigated one conversation regarding extending the asylum dispersal scheme to Shropshire but to date this has not been implemented.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The involvement of Shropshire in supporting the repatriation of Syrian refugees and in supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children is a new and emerging area of work for the local authority and it will be important to monitor the impact of this from both a financial, workforce, education and community perspective.
- 6.2 The positive progress to date has been achieved through a commitment made by all Partners to work together to deliver this service. The learning points identified from supporting and housing the first cohort of arrivals has been reviewed and actions implemented for the second arrival cohort.

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p>
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<p>Cabinet report 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 - The provision and Support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers In Shropshire</p>
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<p><b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b></p>
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<p><b>Councillor Mal Price</b></p>
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<p><b>Councillor Lee Chapman</b></p>
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<p><b>Councillor David Minnery</b></p>
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<p><b>Local Member</b></p>
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<p>All – this is a Countywide matter</p>
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<p><b>Appendices</b></p>
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<p>Appendix A - Luggage Labels</p>
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<p>Appendix B – Infographic illustrating the national picture</p>
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