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Dear Clive Wright

Dispersal Scheme for Adult Asylum Seekers

I am writing to you in connection with the above scheme. As you will be aware the Asylum and Immigration Act 1999, and its provisions, were implemented with the intention and purpose of ensuring that asylum seekers were dispersed across the UK, in addition to this that no one local authority, area, or region became over-proliferated with those seeking support through the asylum system. The Act makes direct provision for the Secretary of State to provide support for those claiming asylum and to instruct the cooperation and support of local authorities in doing so. Since this time, in the West Midlands seven authorities operate as asylum dispersal areas.

UKVI along with the support of Strategic Migration Partnerships has since 2015 been involved in a programme of work to widen the number of asylum dispersal areas in order to support and ease pressures on existing areas throughout the United Kingdom. We have met with you and all of the other current non-participating local authorities to discuss what this means in practice and provide information about the asylum process and asylum accommodation.

Following these meetings, we are now asking all Local Authorities we have met with for their agreement around the placement of an initial cohort of asylum seekers. UKVI will work closely with you in order in order to support this process.

- Asylum cohort – UKVI are happy to work with you to agree an initial cluster. For context and by way of an example other new dispersal areas have agreed on a cluster of between 25 and 50 asylum seekers. We are happy to be guided by you on this, however, given the services that our Provider must undertake on the maintaining the properties and supporting the occupants I would suggest that 25 be seen as a minimum.
- Location – We will be guided by yourselves on the most practicable areas within your Local Authority. Again, best practice from other areas has usually meant this is best as a central area, with good transport links and services. Where you have taken refugees from the Syrian

Vulnerable Persons Scheme it has also worked well if asylum dispersal follows in those areas given the support and links usually already established.

- Timescale – I can confirm that UKVI are happy for the rollout to take shape at a pace with which you are comfortable. With other new areas this has been over a three to six month period, which allows time to source the properties, for the Local Authority to consider them and for the Provider to bring them up to the standards of the contract.
- In order to provide reassurances around property standards we would encourage and be happy to facilitate the inspection of properties, this can be done with the Provider and UKVI should you wish so we can talk through the contractual requirements with your relevant officers.
- Finally, in terms of future growth in numbers I can confirm that this would not take place without a review meeting with the Local Authority in the first instance, involving the Strategic Migration Partnership, UKVI and our Provider. A review would take place as a minimum at the end of the roll-out of your initial agreed cluster where we would then agree with you next steps for this strand of work.

I hope the above goes some way to reassure you that asylum dispersal can take place with you in control and at a pace and scale with which you feel comfortable. I would be grateful for your response to the above by the 22nd of December (please respond to wmsmp@birmingham.gov.uk). Should you require any further information about the asylum process or asylum accommodation then do not hesitate to contact your Strategic Migration Partnership or myself.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

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