

Report of the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) to the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 8th November 2017

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Subject: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Summary statement:

**A report regarding the current work being undertaken in Bradford with
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.**

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Portfolio:

Children's Services

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is a report regarding the current work being undertaken in Bradford with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are children and young people under the age of 16 who are subject to immigration control and do not have any adult family member in the country who is able to care for them. Bradford in previous years has cared for a small number of UASC who have arrived spontaneously in the district.
- 2.2 Nationally, as at 31 March 2016, Councils were supporting 4,689 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). There has been a sharp increase in arrivals of unaccompanied children largely driven by the clearance of the Calais migrant camp, the Dubs Amendment to the Immigration Act and children being transferred under Dublin III arrangements.
- 2.3 In July 2016, the Home Office, Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government jointly published the "Interim National Transfer Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children 2016-17". This saw the start of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), which is a scheme that asks that all local authorities in the country to offer care to a proportion of UASC's relevant to their overall size and population. This scheme was developed in response to the excessive demand on certain local authorities where young people arrived such as Kent, Croydon and other London Boroughs.
- 2.4 Currently Bradford Through Care Team is supporting 32 UASC. 20 of these are young people who have been placed through the National Transfer Scheme, and the others have been 'spontaneous' arrivals or are young people who became looked after through other reasons, for it then to be identified that they were young people subject to immigration control who had no parent or adult in the country able to care for them.
- 2.5 Of these 32 young people currently our responsibility, 7 are 18+ and Care Leavers. The other 25 are spontaneous arrivals or have been placed through the National Transfer Scheme.
- 2.6 **The National Transfer Scheme** - Through the National Transfer Scheme Bradford has now taken 20 young people, all aged 16+. The scheme is worked out on the principle of each local authority taking responsibility for 0.07% of their child population, though in reality by June 2017 no Yorkshire and Humberside local authority has taken more than 50% of this number yet. For Bradford 0.07% would be 90+ UASC which would be a very significant number of young people to care for. In June 2016 Bradford was caring for 23% of the number identified as 0.07%. Leeds have the highest number of UASC in the region.
- 2.7 The National Transfer Scheme is coordinated locally by Migration Yorkshire, and there are regular Regional meetings of all the Local Authorities with Migration Yorkshire.

- 2.8 Migration Yorkshire are responsible for liaising with all Local Authorities in the region to place children and young people across the region. Bradford has agreed to take young people who are aged 16+ as we are more able to identify accommodation for these young people. Regular meetings are held with all the local authorities caring for UASC in the region to share practice, experiences etc.
- 2.9 **Care and Pathway Planning** - All confirmed UASC who come to Bradford are accepted as looked after children, allocated a social worker, and an Independent Reviewing Officer, and provided with appropriate accommodation. An individual care/pathway plan is developed to ensure that their needs are being addressed as far as possible. They are supported in attending appointments with Immigration services, but also in ensuring health and education needs are addressed. This work is managed between social workers and community resource workers in the team.
- 2.10 **General trends** – while historically the UASC we cared for were predominantly males from Afghanistan, the young people who have arrived through the NTS are made up of 17 male and 3 female young people from countries including Egypt, Albania, Somalia and Iraq. For the young people we are caring for, workers take care to support them into linking into other members of their home community and in their local communities.
- 2.11 Immigration Issues – Young people are supported to attend appointments with the Home Office regarding their asylum applications, and are supported in seeking appropriate legal advice. Changes in Home Office arrangements has seen these appointments being in the Midlands and in London rather than more locally. We are liaising with Migration Yorkshire on this issue. An important part of the work with these young people is ensuring planning for the future is ‘twin tracked’ on the basis that they may or may not have their asylum claims accepted.
- 2.12 **Safeguarding** – usual safeguarding procedures are followed for UASC, but ensuring understanding is in place regarding their situation and history. Particular focus is placed on ensuring any issues of young people who may go missing is shared with the Home Office through Migration Yorkshire, but this is not a significant issue locally. In light of the recent high profile incident in Parsons Green which was linked to a young person who had been placed with foster carers, further work is to be developed to ensure carers have had the appropriate training to understand radicalisation issues, but no local issues or concerns have been identified.
- 2.13 **Employment Education and training** – younger UASC are registered in schools and are supported to make progress, including learning English. For the older UASC the first step is to enrol in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses and from there to link into further education opportunities, usually at local colleges.
- 2.14 **Health** – all UASC are given a health assessment on becoming looked after, and a health action plan is put in place. There are strong links with health colleagues, who have expressed some issues about capacity to provide these services, and concerns about how the needs of young people who have experienced traumatic

experiences both in their home countries and in their journeys to UK are best met. The LAC Health Team links closely with Bevan House in addressing the needs of these young people.

Within the Through Care Service a number of UASC have engaged positively with the B Fit weekly gym group. A number of these young people attended the Care Leavers Event on the 25-10-17 and achieved a certificate as recognition of their involvement. In the near future a UASC football group will re launch this all contributes for their engagement in the community.

Other local youth activities are being looked at to involve young people and UASC.

- 2.15 **Accommodation** – the local authority has commissioned short term ‘welcome’ supported independent living accommodation for a number of NTS UASC, and also provides accommodation with supported lodging providers and with other independent living providers. Under 16’s are placed with foster carers. Bradford is linking with other local authorities in Yorkshire and Humberside to seek funding to develop recruitment of carers who are specifically interested in caring for younger UASC. This is in the national context of a shortage of foster carers for children in care. This work is at an early stage of development regionally.
- 2.16 **Multi-agency working** – links have been made with other departments within children’s services, and with other agencies to ensure strategic overview and information sharing re UASC. Quarterly strategic overview meetings are planned.

3. **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

4. **FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 From 1 July 2016 new national rates for Local Authorities looking after unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children were agreed:

- £41,610 per child per year for children under the age of 16;
- £33,215 per child per year for children aged 16 and 17;
- £200 per child per week for UASCs who qualify for leaving care support.

A national review of the financial arrangements is currently being undertaken, but many local authorities are raising concerns that these rates are not sufficient to cover the full costs of caring for some UASC who have additional needs.

- 4.2 In Bradford it has been identified that further analysis is needed regarding this and a financial review will be completed by the end of November to ensure we have a full understanding of how the funding received from the Home Office is utilised to provide services and care to our UASC, and if there are any shortfalls in this funding.
- 4.3 These financial arrangements do not provide resources to address the health needs of UASC.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 Further analysis is needed regarding the financial implications of our current work with UASC.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 All UASC are looked after children.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Please consider and comment on the equality impacts of any new, review, or removal of policies, practices, strategies, services or functions. In some instances this may require the completion of an equality impact assessment form. Full guidance is available on BradNet (link available in the report guide).

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

No issues.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

No issues.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

It is important that UASC issues and developments are linked to other work regarding new communities locally.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

No issues.

7.6 TRADE UNION

No issues.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

None.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

None.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That Members note this report.

11. APPENDICES

No appendices.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-interim-national-transfer-scheme>