

Report of the Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services) to the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 27th April 2016



Subject: Asylum Seeking/Refugee Looked After Children

Summary statement:

Bradford Children's Services care for a small number of children who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. These young people have arrived in the UK with no parents or guardians. They are assessed on referral to the department and become looked after. The majority are aged 16 and over and live in supported accommodation. Younger children are cared for in local resources.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services



1. SUMMARY

Bradford Children's Services care for a small number of children and young people who are identified as Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. These young people have arrived in the UK with no parents or guardians. The young people are assessed on referral to the department and become looked after. The majority are aged 16 and over and live in supported accommodation. Younger children are cared for in local resources.

2. BACKGROUND

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are children and young people who have arrived in the country and are not accompanied by an adult who has parental responsibility for them. They become the responsibility of the local authority where they initially 'appear' and as such Bradford has relatively few UASC. Higher numbers are found in London Boroughs and local authorities that have Channel ports.

There is a very small number of looked after children from refugee families that have become looked after as a result of their families being unable to provide appropriate care. This report does not focus on those children.

2.1 General Trends:

Over the past 4 years, the numbers of UASC have decreased both in respect of total numbers and as a proportion of the leaving care population. Bradford Childrens Services are currently caring for 2 under 16 year olds and 5 16-18 year olds, with Leaving Care Support being provided to 18 young people who are 18+. This compares to 8 16-18 year olds and 39 18+ in April 2012. (Appendix 1)

The cases are held in the Looked After Children team and in the Leaving Care Service, with the majority of the work led from Leaving Care.

The predominant nationality has remained from Afghanistan and the gender balance has remained overwhelmingly male, although recently there has been a slight proportionate increase in the numbers of female asylum seekers. Most Afghani UASC come from a Dari speaking Hazara background, although recently there has been a proportionate increase in the number of Pashto speaking Pathans. Most of our UASC have eventually had their asylum claims granted, albeit for some after lengthy appeal processes.

2.2 Employment Education and Training:

The UASC who are of school age are in full time education and fully supported to aspire to reach their potential.

Over the years of caring for UASC, the majority have been in some form of employment, education or training. Our experience is that most UASC are keen to learn English, further their education and gain qualifications and employability skills. UASC currently account for approximately 25% of care leavers in higher education. In general, UASC awaiting asylum decisions are prohibited from taking employment and faster tracking of asylum claims by the Border and Immigration Agency may account for the decrease in the proportion of UASC identified as NEET.

2.3 Health:

Emotional health remains a major concern for young people awaiting decisions about leave to remain or receiving adverse decisions and facing the prospect of removal and the Leaving Care Service encourages participation in physical and communal activities as a way of managing stress, such as going to the gym or taking part in sports, as well as developing friendship networks among themselves and other young people.

2.4 Accommodation:

Three young people are placed in local authority care.

For the older (16+) young people those UASC from Afghanistan have usually wanted to live in shared houses with each other and we have continued to work closely with the Palm Cove Society in supporting young people in this way, developing their understanding of life in the UK and gaining independent living skills. As young people have adjusted to British culture, become more established in their friendship groups and progressed with their education, at their request we have supported them to move into their own accommodation, usually a privately rented flat within the community or within university accommodation.

2.5 Identity:

Most Afghani UASC come from a Dari speaking Hazara background, although recently there has been a proportionate increase in the number of Pashto speaking Pathans. Most maintain their adherence to Islam, with the former group usually attending Shia mosques and the latter Sunni mosques. Of the other nationalities, most are also adherents of Islam. As the young people learn English and progress educationally, our experience is that most are keen to assimilate into mainstream society and seek British citizenship.

Service Development

2.6 Age Assessments

When an unaccompanied asylum seeking child or young person is referred to Children's Services, the young person does not have accurate documentation that identifies their age. As a result Children's Services have to undertake an assessment of their age.

Age assessments are undertaken by the initial assessment team alongside a full assessment of needs. Once it has been ascertained that the young person is under the age of 18 years then Leaving Care Service or Looked after Service would become involved.

Work has taken place to ensure that the age assessments completed are 'Merton' compliant (this refers to a Legal judgement where age assessments were required to be of a certain standard).

- Three sets of age assessment training have taken place across Children's Social Care.
- All age assessments are scrutinised to ensure quality is consistent.
- A clearer pathway between the Leaving Care Service and the Assessment Team identifies roles and responsibilities and alerts between services.
- The Leaving Care Service establish arrangements for supporting the Assessment Team to undertake age assessments.

2.7 Accommodation:

Liaison with accommodation providers takes place on a regular basis. Early liaison takes place with the assessment team when accommodation is required. Consideration when seeking accommodation is given to other UASC being in placement from the same country, culture, language etc to offer peer support.

2.8 Education:

Good links are in place with the careers service to ensure quick progression on to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses (or whatever is appropriate).

2.9 Health :

One of the Leaving Care Service Nurses takes responsibility for having an overview of all UASC within the Department. This ensures the following:

- Medical screening is undertaken
- Paediatric assessment is undertaken by the community Paediatrician
- Immunisations are looked at and addressed
- Any health issues are addressed and the health worker supports workers to ensure tasks are carried out.
- If formal mental health services are required liaison takes place with staff within Leaving Care Service who are Accredited Mental Health Practitioner's and who can refer directly to Mental Health services.
- Emotional well being is looked at as part of the ongoing care planning. Leaving Care has an emotional well being drop- in that is staffed by the Leaving Care Nurse and a social worker.

3. REPORT ISSUES

None.

4. OPTIONS

None.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

None.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report be noted.

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Statistics regarding UASC

Appendix 1

REPORT FOR CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ON UASC

Statistics:

	April 2012	April 2014	April 2016
Total Numbers:			
Under 16s			2
16 / 17 yrs	8	1	5
18+	39	28	23
Gender:	M=44 / F=3	M=27 / F=2	M=22 / F=5
Nationalities:	Afghanistan = 28 China = 1 Congo = 1 Guinea = 1 Iran = 2 Iraq = 3 Malawi = 1 Nigeria = 2 Pakistan = 2 Sierra Leone = 1 Vietnam = 3 Zimbabwe = 2	Afghanistan = 21 Iran = 2 Iraq = 1 Malawi = 2 Nigeria = 1 Zimbabwe = 2	Afghanistan = 14 Bangladesh = 2 Congo = 1 Ethiopia = 1 Iran = 2 Iraq = 2 Malawi = 1 Nigeria = 1 Sudan = 1 Syria = 1 Zimbabwe = 2 Pakistan = 2
School	1	0	3
ESOL / foundation education	7	1	4
In Training	3	4	3
Number in Further Education:	16	9	6
Number in Higher Education	4	6	7
In Employment	4	0	2
Parenting:	2	0	1
Illness:	1	0	0
NEET:	6	9	3
Missing:	3	0	0
Accommodation on leaving care:			
Supported Accommodation Project:	15	6	5
Privately rented tenancy:	23	23	20
Staying Put:	0	0	2