

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	16 October 2018
Title:	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Hampshire
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the content of the report (attached at Appendix A) and the activity being undertaken to support UASC in Hampshire.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The purpose of this short report is to update the Children and Families Advisory Panel on the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) being cared for by Hampshire Children's Services. The report will also highlight activity in this area and consider any issues in relation to this work.

3. Contextual Information

- 3.1 Running total of UASC placed in Hampshire April 2017 to August 2018;

Month	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17
Total UASC	83	86	86	91	92	99	104	106	114
Month	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	
Total UASC	116	113	109	115	117	114	131	132	

- 3.2 The above table details the number of UASC that are looked after by Children's Services. On 31 August 2018, 132 children aged between 12 and 17 years were placed in foster care or supportive accommodation.

In addition they are 93 young people aged 18 to 25 who are being supported by Children's Services as care leavers.

- 3.3 Approximately half of the UASC looked after by Hampshire have been accepted through the National Transfer Scheme. This scheme ensures that responsibility is taken as a region for UASC who are entering the country. A number of local authorities such as Kent and Portsmouth have high numbers of UASC and as a way of alleviating pressure on services in these areas, UASC are transferred to neighbouring local authorities through the scheme which is operated by the South East Migration Team in this region. It is suggested that each local authority should support a number of UASC that equates to 0.007% of the population (for Hampshire this would be 192 USAC). In Hampshire at the end of August 2018 there were 132 UASC who are looked after and are part of the 0.007% 192 cohort. As the 93 care leavers are over the age of 18 they do not form part of the cohort.
- 3.4 UASC arriving in Hampshire are typically older teenagers, so although there has been an increase in arrivals there has also been an increase of young people leaving the cohort and moving into the care leaver cohort.
- 3.5 Over the summer months there has been an increase in spontaneous arrivals into Hampshire. These children arrivals typically arrive by lorry and are detained by the police at service stations along the M3/M27 motorway and similar. In addition immigration, through targeted operations, has started to identify other UASC for example a young Vietnamese girl residing with the owners of a nail bar in Basingstoke. Assessment and investigation into this case determined that the girl at the very least had been smuggled into the country potentially trafficked.
- 3.6 Following on from Hampshire being very proactive in offering placements following the closure of the Calais camp in November 2016, we have continued to offer placements through the transfer scheme. Hampshire's contribution and willingness to support the transfer scheme is held in very high regard by the South East Migration Service.
- 3.7 In addition to activity within the transfer scheme and the increase in spontaneous arrivals, HCC have been approached on two occasions within the last six months by Portsmouth City Council, who experience particular problems due to being a port local authority. On each of these occasions, Portsmouth had discovered large groups of asylum seekers entering the country. Hampshire have identified placements and accommodated between 5 and 7 young people for Portsmouth, taking full legal and financial case responsibility.
- 3.8 In respect of allocation to social worker teams in Hampshire, young people arriving through the transfer scheme are allocated directly to Children in Care teams. Those arriving of their own accord generally are

allocated initially within Childrens Assessment and Safeguarding teams (CAST). The Willow Team (a multi-agency team of staff working with children at risk of or subject to exploitation) are involved with all cases, ensuring that appropriate trafficking assessments are completed and safety plans are in place. A section 47 (Child Protection) investigation is undertaken on all new UASC arriving in Hampshire.

- 3.9 There are a number of challenges in caring for and supporting these young people. The main challenges are in terms of placements, interpreters, health care and immigration.

4. Placements

- 4.1 A large number of UASC are placed with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers. These placements are expensive, costing on average over £730 per week. A large proportion of these placements are outside of Hampshire. Hampshire now has a number of UASC placed in London and the surrounding areas. The distance has an impact on the social workers ability to build a relationship with the young person or their carer, although it is acknowledged this applies to all children in care placed at distance. Potentially the issue of local placements could be more significant for UASC, where there are concerns that the young person has been trafficked into the country, with the risk being increased with a higher proportion of placements in certain areas.
- 4.2 Two teams in Hampshire are currently piloting the use of specialist workers (one Social Worker in a Child in Care team and one Personal Adviser in a Care Leavers team) who are based in London and work exclusively with UASC in and around the London Area. The pilot has been in place for 3-4 months and will be evaluated to inform decisions about how such arrangements benefit children and young adults, and reduce travel time for social workers and PAs in Hampshire.
- 4.3 There is often very little if any information in respect of UASC and placements are nearly always made in an emergency, therefore there is often little if any matching of placements and this lack of matching will have an impact on the stability of placement. In addition, it is often more difficult to access resources for a young person residing outside of the responsible local authority, especially services attending to children's emotional health and well-being.

5. Education

- 5.1 The virtual school provides a good service to UASC up to year 11, however there are some difficulties being experienced when the young person is due to transfer to college. Some colleges require all attendees to speak English and ESOL courses can be difficult to source. These issues can mean that some young people are sometimes forced to travel long distances to attend.

- 5.2 Some colleges do not allow entry mid year having only one intake in September, leading to some UASC being out of education for long periods. In other cases children are only offered a few hours education per week.

6. Interpreters

- 6.1 Good practice determines that interpreters are required every time the social worker meets with the young person. Obviously, the demand for interpreting services has increased and the preferred provider (Lingland) is also finding the demand for their services a challenge. With a large proportion of placements occurring out of county arrangements for transport for the interpreter are also falling to the social worker. In addition social workers are often visiting a number of UASC in the same day, which also requires the coordination of several interpreters. Interpreters are not always available out of hours which are when a lot of these young people are discovered.

7. Health/Therapy

- 7.1 Although the initial health assessment is carried out by the CLA nurse, appointments can be difficult for UASC. For some children who have never been to see a doctor or a dentist the experience may be harrowing to them and therefore extra appointments or time at appointments may be required. An interpreter is also required for medical appointments. There are no current issues with being able to register young people with Doctors in Hampshire.
- 7.2 In terms of accessing therapy through CAMHS this is largely linked to the area where a young person is placed. These young people have experienced difficult journeys, often travelling through conflict areas and have been exploited and abused. At this stage their therapeutic needs are unlikely to be clear, however they are expected to be significant.

8. Immigration

- 8.1 The immigration process has changed, meaning that the majority of cases are dealt with via an appointment through the Home Office. There have been some recent difficulties in securing appointments and ensuring that a young person has legal representation at any identified appointment. This means that some older children have not had their immigration status resolved by the time they reach adulthood, and in those cases, the young adult will have no recourse to public funds and will be entirely dependent on children's services for income on which to live.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 In conclusion, there continues to be a flow of UASC coming into Hampshire. The future trend is impossible to predict but the children are all well protected and become 'Looked after Children', and then Care Leavers which means they can go on receiving support and advice up to the age of 25yrs.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

A high level Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The grants are intended to have a positive impact and advance equality.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1 Not applicable.

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Not applicable.

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Not applicable.