

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Report

<b>Committee/Panel:</b>	Children and Families Advisory Panel
<b>Date:</b>	17 October 2017
<b>Title:</b>	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
<b>Report From:</b>	Steve Crocker, Director of Children's Services

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this short report is to 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.

### 2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Number of new UASC arriving placed in Hampshire April 2016 to July 2017;

	Apr-Jun 2016	Jul-Sept 2016	Oct 2016	Nov 2016	Dec 2016	Jan 2017	Feb 2017	March 2017	April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017
	7	19	17	8	2	4	7	9	3	5	5	5
Quarterly Data	7	19	27			20			13			

- 2.2. The majority of new UASC looked after by Hampshire as of 31 July 2017, have been accepted through the South East Dispersal 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 or 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 South East Dispersal scheme. 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 195 USAC).
- 2.3. In addition to those children transferred through the dispersal scheme a number of UASC enter Hampshire of their own accord or have been trafficked into the country. Typically these young people are often found on the motorway having been transported in on lorries.

- 2.4. Hampshire was also proactive in offering placements at the time of the closure of the Calais refugee camp in October/November 2016. Ten UASC were also taken outside of the transfer scheme from Portsmouth, as they were significantly over numbers. It was felt that by taking these young people outside of the scheme from a neighbouring local authority, the young people could remain in their existing placements as most were placed within Hampshire or local to Hampshire.
- 2.5. In respect of allocation to social worker teams in Hampshire, young people arriving through the dispersal scheme are allocated directly to Children in Care teams. Those arriving of their own accord generally are allocated initially within R&A teams. The Willow Team are involved with all cases, ensuring that appropriate trafficking assessments are completed and safety plans are in place. A section 47 investigation is undertaken on all new UASC arriving in Hampshire.
- 2.6. There are a number of challenges that Children in Care teams report in caring for and supporting these young people. The main challenges are in terms of placements, interpreters, health care and immigration.

### **3. Placements**

- 3.1. 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 Croydon, Southall, Bracknell 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.
- 3.2. Teams being allocated young people arriving through the dispersal team have often encountered some challenges in contacting relevant professionals from the transferring local authority to verify information.
- 3.3. In addition, it is often more difficult to access resources for a young person residing outside of the responsible local authority.

### **4. Education**

- 4.1. The virtual school provides a good service to UASC up to year 11, however, Children in Care teams report 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.

- 4.2. 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. Some Children in Care managers, have reported positive support from other local authorities in accessing placements, for example Bracknell has assisted when Hampshire have not been able to source education.

## **5. Interpreters**

- 5.1. 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. It has been reported by Children in Care teams that the service is not always able to provide an interpreter for all languages e.g. Mongolian.

## **6. Health/Therapy**

- 6.1. 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. On a positive note the Children in Care Team managers did not report any issues in being able to register a young person with a doctor.
- 6.2. In terms of accessing therapy through CAMHS, this is largely linked to the area where a young person is placed. Some Children in Care Teams reported that the local CAMHS were working with UASC, whereas others spoke of long waiting lists. It is acknowledged that the therapy would need to be individually tailored and at this stage. 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.

## **7. Immigration**

- 7.1. The immigration process has recently 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. In one case, a UASC was placed from the dispersal system after 3 months in placement, when it became evident that no checks had been undertaken by the previous local authority, this resulted in the immigration process being delayed.

7.2. Whilst the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for trafficked young people is accepted as being important, social workers feel that the form is time consuming. The Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (ICTA) service may assist with this issue. Hampshire is an early adopter site for this service and is working closely with Barnardo's and other neighbouring local authorities.

## **8. Finance**

8.1. Hampshire County Council is able to claim back some of the costs associated with caring for UASC and those who go on to become care leavers. However, the amount that can be claimed is not enough to cover costs and work is being undertaken currently to ensure that the total cost is better evidenced with a view to influencing decision making in this area in future.

8.2. A further consideration is that the age of UASC tends to be late teens and therefore, a number of young people quickly reach the age of eighteen and transfer over to care leavers. Accommodation and support costs for this group of care leavers tend to be higher with limited funding from government.

## **9. Performance**

9.1. Some performance indicators in respect of Children in Care may be affected for example those around health and education.

9.2. It is often difficult if not impossible to ascertain medical history in respect of immunisations, there may well be delays due to availability of interpreters to accessing Child Looked After medicals.

9.3. In addition, indicators in respect of placement stability are affected as young people are placed within emergency placements and subsequently are required to move onto more permanent placements.

## **10. Further DUBS arrivals**

10.1. Hampshire have received notification that the UK will be accepting the transfer of a further 250 DUBS arrivals in the coming months. No specific timescale has been provided for these arrivals therefore, it is difficult to proactively secure placements.

10.2. An initial placement search has been undertaken which has identified a number of IFA placements, however, at this stage; it is not possible to secure the placements without retainers. Given there is no identified date for the agreed transfer of these children to the UK, Hampshire has not retained any placement. The majority of placements identified are outside of Hampshire. It is unlikely local authorities will receive much notice in order

to identify and coordinate placements for any young people that are accepted. One of the Out of Hours Team managers was instrumental in coordinating staff, transport and placements at the time of the closure of the Calais Camp. It is suggested that some of the learning and arrangements used previously are utilised to manage the next cohort of DUBS arrivals.

## **11. Recommendations**

- 11.1. That the Children and Families Advisory Board note the contents of the report.
- 11.2. That an updated report to be provided in February 2018.

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

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	Yes
<b>OR</b>	
<b>This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:</b>	

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u> Not aware of any previous member decisions	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u> Children Act 1989 Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Immigration Act 2016 and Dubs Amendment (S67)	<u>Date</u> 1989 2000 2016

**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.)**

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Not Applicable	

## 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:

See guidance at <http://intranet.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-assessments.htm>

*Inset in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state*

- (a) why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- (b) will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions.*

All UASC accommodated and cared for by Children's Services will be provided with support in order to access services in the same way as any other child in care in order that they are able to reach their full potential. As part of ongoing assessment all UASC will have their cultural and religious needs assessed and reviewed and positive actions will be taken to support these needs.

**2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

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