

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	<b>Children and Young People Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel</b>	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	<b>13<sup>th</sup> September 2016</b>	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	<b>Update on Un-Accompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)</b>	
WARD:	All	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b>		
<b>N/A</b>		

### 1. THE ISSUE

- 1.1. This paper seeks to update the Scrutiny Panel on the Council's response to the government's request that all Local Authorities participate in the new national dispersal system for un-accompanied asylum seeking children. The dispersal of these young people will be through a regional model. In the South West, SW Councils have agreed to assist in facilitating this process. The government has calculated the number of UASC to be placed within each Local Authority over the next two years using the 0-19 population figure against a projection of current UASC's. Bath and North-East Somerset will be expected to take a total of 23 young people.
- 1.2. An Unaccompanied Asylum seeking child is a person, who at the time of making the asylum application is; (a) Under the age of 18 years, or in the absence of documentary evidence appears to be under the age of 18. (b) Is applying for asylum in his or her own right (c) Has no relative or guardian to turn to in this country.

### 2. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 2.1. The costs of placing un-accompanied Asylum seeking children will be covered by the government, according to the following rates; (a) for young people under 16 years of age the government will cover accommodation/support costs up to £41,000 per year per young person. (b) for young people 16/17 yrs the government will cover accommodation/support costs up to £31,000.

### **3. STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL**

- 3.1. All UASC's placed through this scheme will be deemed as children in care on account of their vulnerability and because they do not have anyone with parental responsibility with them.
- 3.2. Current guidance indicates that at the point that the young person reaches the age of 18 they will be expected to be returned to their country of origin, unless they choose to claim political asylum as an adult.
- 3.3. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been specifically undertaken in relation to this issue, but consideration has been given to the public sector equality duty. The relevant protected characteristics for these purposes are age, race and religion or belief. The purpose of our co-operation in this scheme is to ensure that unaccompanied asylum seeking children receive help and support that is designed to protect them from potential discrimination, harassment or victimization. By offering support in this manner, equality of opportunity is enhanced for those children.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1. For a number of years the vast amount of un-accompanied young people entering the UK have done so through the port of Dover, which has meant that Children's Services in Kent have been required to accommodate them and take responsibility for placing them in foster care. These young people have usually arrived in this country by illegally stowing away in the back of a lorry or by coming through the Channel tunnel. For some time Kent have been lobbying the government to say that their resources and ability to meaningfully manage this growing group of vulnerable young people has been at breaking point. Last summer the Director of Kent wrote to all Local Authorities requesting that they volunteer to take a number of UASC each to relieve the pressure on services in Kent. As a result of this plea BaNES agreed to take three UASC from Kent. These young people were placed quickly and continue to do well.
- 4.2. However, this voluntary system did not produce a uniform or sufficient response to alleviate the growing pressures faced by Kent (and to a slightly lesser extent Croydon and Northamptonshire). Therefore in May this year the government notified all Local Authorities that it would be introducing a compulsory National Dispersal System for UASC's. This system began at the start of July.
- 4.3. To date we have taken 5 young people through the scheme in addition to the three existing UASC's that we took from Kent last year.
- 4.4. These young people will have the status of 'Looked After' children and will require foster placements or supported lodgings placements.
- 4.5. The national dispersal system commenced in July. It will be done regionally, with each LA taking a small number of UASC on a rota system.
- 4.6. BaNES was asked by South West Councils to lead on the setting up the rota system for agreeing the dispersal of young people across the whole of the South West. As a region we will be taking just over 700 young people over the next two

years. A memorandum of understanding has now been agreed between the 13 Local Authorities across the South West, with each Local Authority on a rota to take young people in groups of between three and five. It was also agreed that those Local Authorities that either previously did not have any UASC's or very few UASC's would be at the top of the rota, whilst those that already had significant numbers of UASC would be further down the list.

- 4.7. The guidance we have received from the Home Office, which is based on the profile of young people that have been supported by Kent CC and the London Borough of Croydon is that the majority of UASC are from Eritrea, Ethiopia or Albania. In addition over 90% are males aged between 16-18 years.
- 4.8. At present each of the five recently placed young people have been accommodated with agency foster-carers in South Wales due to a lack of suitable and immediately available carers. BaNES was also asked by South West Councils to lead the discussion with the regional independent foster-carer agencies to agree a fee for the placement of UASC across the South West. We now have agreement that these agencies will not charge above the rates stipulated by the government, which means that there should be no direct or immediate cost to the Local Authority in the placement of UASC. However we will need to closely monitor any indirect costs for the placement of these young people at some distance.
- 4.9. The recent guidance sent out by the Home Office in relation to the setting up of the National Dispersal system does include provision to include the "Dubs" children within this remit. This second group are those children currently living in refugee camps in both Europe and other countries, and who are particularly vulnerable by virtue of the fact that they do not have an adult to provide them with the protection that they need and deserve. The government has committed to re-settle up to 3,000 of these children, some of whom will arrive with family, but many will unaccompanied and therefore will be part of this programme. At present very few of these "Dubs" children have come to this country, but once this group of children do begin to moved out of the refugee camps and into the UK we would expect to receive a number of these within the quota of 23 that the government has identified for BaNES.

## 5. SUMMARY

- 5.1. This report outlines the current position in relation to BaNES participation in the National Dispersal scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and sets out the number of young people the government wishes us to take over the next two years. It will important that we ensure that this vulnerable group of young people receive a service that is every bit as comparable to that provided for other young people in our care.

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<b>Background papers</b>	Children Act 1989

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