

13 January 2017

## **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

### **Purpose**

For information.

### **Summary**

This paper updates members on the resettlement of unaccompanied children seeking asylum across the UK, including information on funding arrangements.

### **Recommendations**

The Children and Young People Board is asked to;

1. Note the recent and upcoming activity in this area.
2. Feedback any issues or local learning that they would like us to share as part our ongoing dialogue with government.

### **Action**

Officers to take action as directed by members.

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## **Unaccompanied Asylum Children**

### **Arrivals from Europe**

1. The Government has confirmed that more than 750 children have come to the UK from the Calais camp since 10 October. While the majority of these children were reunited with family under the Dublin Treaty, approximately 200 children were placed in local authority care under the “Dubs Amendment” via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).
2. The children’s eligibility for transfer was clarified by Home Office officials in Calais, and social workers were seconded from English local authorities to assess the children in France prior to arrival in the UK. However, the clearance of the Calais camp led to local authorities being involved in the development of a significantly more rapid process than had been planned for during the development of the NTS. The level of local, regional and national leadership shown in building capacity for this group of children at pace and at scale should not be underestimated.
3. The government has now confirmed that a much smaller number of eligible children will be transferred from Greece under the Dubs Amendment in the coming weeks, alongside ongoing family reunions under the Dublin Treaty.
4. Any placements that had been made available by local authorities for Calais transfers but have yet to be taken up will be used for this new cohort, or for other unaccompanied children resettled via the NTS.
5. Home Office officials have confirmed that use of the NTS to support those councils which continue to care for disproportionate numbers of unaccompanied children will be a priority in the coming weeks. There were over 3,000 asylum applications from UASC in the year as of [September 2016](#), a 15% rise from the previous year<sup>1</sup>. At [31 March 2016](#), unaccompanied children represented 6 per cent of the looked after children population<sup>2</sup>.

### **Funding**

6. Local authorities are currently receiving enhanced rates for unaccompanied children arriving after 1 July 2016: £114 a day for under 16 year olds, £91 a day for 16-17 year olds; and £200 per week for those leaving care.
7. Although the LGA is continuing to press for full funding, we have seen some important concessions from Government in response to sustained and strong lobbying:
  - 7.1. It has been confirmed in Parliament that there is no intention to reduce the current daily rate for unaccompanied children;

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<sup>1</sup> Immigration Statistics: July to September 2016, Home Office

<sup>2</sup> Children looked after in England year ending 31 March 2016, DfE

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- 7.2. There will be a funding review in spring 2017, alongside publication of a new government strategy;
  - 7.3. Local authorities may also be able to use the £100m Controlling Migration Fund (CMF) to support initiatives for these children, such as foster care recruitment campaigns, training for social workers or specialist counselling. Interested authorities can contact their Regional Strategic Migration Partnership or [migrationfund@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:migrationfund@communities.gsi.gov.uk) for more information.
  - 7.4. English local authorities undertaking assessments for family reunification of children coming from Calais under the Dublin Treaty will automatically receive a payment via the CMF. Payments will be £300 for each relevant assessment, and these will be paid once all relevant assessments are concluded through a single s31 grant payment, based on Home Office data. This payment is expected around the end of January 2017. These payments relate to the family assessment, associated report writing and liaison with Home Office on the outcome of the assessment.
  - 7.5. Grant instructions have now been amended so that local authorities can claim funding for children coming into care as a result of family reunification arrangements breaking down;
  - 7.6. Local authorities can now claim funding for all care leavers transferred via the NTS who were supported as unaccompanied children, removing the requirement to bear the costs for the first 25 in each area;
  - 7.7. Changes are being implemented under the Immigration Act which allow care leavers with status to apply for student loans, subject to certain conditions, reducing the costs to local authorities if those young people go on to further education.
  - 7.8. A £3 million Child Trafficking Protection Fund has also been announced, which aims to enable the delivery of new and innovative projects or initiatives to provide positive outcomes for potentially trafficked children.
8. It is important to note that current UASC funding rates were set on the basis of analysis by the Home Office of grant claims from local authorities for the costs incurred in caring for unaccompanied children. We are aware that many local authorities do not currently claim for all costs incurred, and it is therefore important that full costs are included in any grant claims to ensure that the forthcoming review of funding is based on accurate information on the support provided for this cohort of children.

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9. LGA asylum and migration lead members met the Immigration Minister on 22 November to raise ongoing concerns around funding, lack of fostering capacity and the resulting upward pressure on independent foster agency prices. They also fed back concerns about new arrivals who may not be looked after long enough to qualify for leaving care support, and the need to prevent children going missing.

### **Next steps**

10. A meeting is planned in mid-January for key stakeholders including the LGA, ADCS, Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships and a range of government departments to share key learning from the Calais operation.
11. We would welcome any additional feedback from CYP Board members to inform our ongoing discussions with government. We have been in daily contact with local government colleagues throughout this process, and are aware of the remarkable levels of support that councils have provided to these vulnerable children, often at very short notice. We are also aware of the significant pressures that this effort has caused locally, both logistically and financially.
12. LGA policy in this area is led by the LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group, made up of regional member and RSMP representation covering all of the English regions, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. The Task Group, chaired by Cllr David Simmonds, will report to the Children and Young People Board and the Community Wellbeing Boards. The Task Group is seeking a meeting with the Immigration Minister to discuss the need for clearer links across all the programmes that resettle asylum seekers and refugees that minimise the pressures on local authorities, local communities and vulnerable individuals. Updated information will continue to be placed on the LGA website at [www.local.gov.uk/refugees](http://www.local.gov.uk/refugees).

### **Financial implications**

13. There are no specific additional financial implications for the LGA arising from this report.

### **Implications for Wales**

14. While the Dublin Treaty covers both England and Wales, the Immigration Act 2016 that allows for the transfer of legal responsibility of children applies in England only. The Welsh LGA continues to work with Welsh local authorities and the Home Office on how the NTS and separate child care and protection legislation can support this cohort in Wales.