

# Cabinet

## Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	18 January 2017
<u>Cabinet Member</u> Councillor Deborah Croney - Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills and Children's Safeguarding <u>Lead Director</u> Sara Tough- Director for Children's Services	
<b>Subject of Report</b>	<b>Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children</b>
Executive Summary	<p>In May 2016 the government wrote to all local authorities with information about the intention to resettle unaccompanied children who are considered to be at risk both in the Middle East and refugee camps across Europe. The voluntary scheme which the government agreed through ADCS promotes local authorities to participate in is based on a regional programme of dispersal of unaccompanied asylum seeking Children. This will allow authorities to engage in a reciprocal arrangement of delegating responsibility and receiving responsibility for children as well as allowing for there to be a sharing of resources, knowledge and skills. The expectation is that local authorities will accept 0.07% of their 0-19 population as part of the programme and this equates to 54 for Dorset County Council. The Association of Directors of Children Services (ADCS) has commissioned research and the output of that research has informed the content of this report with regard to cost and outcomes.</p> <p>This report highlights the current position for Dorset County Council in terms of numbers of asylum seeking children looked after. More importantly it details the service and financial risk associated with this voluntary scheme. This is to provide the Cabinet with early insight into the potential issues in order that direction can be made to officers by Cabinet as to future action.</p> <p>It should be noted that arrangements continue to be in place as part of the voluntary scheme and in line with Government expectation we are actively participating in this important programme. The report seeks to provide information as to the potential impact on resources and finance as numbers increase toward the 0.07% allocation using recent research from the ADCS.</p>

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

<p>Impact Assessment:</p> <p><i>Please refer to the <a href="#">protocol</a> for writing reports.</i></p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>This report has not been subject to an EQiA</p> <hr/> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>Research undertaken by the ADCS has formed much of the content and analysis of this report. This has enabled the provision of high quality estimates of cost versus income associated with our participation with the voluntary scheme</p> <hr/> <p>Budget:</p> <p>The current voluntary scheme places additional pressures on placements and the budget available for looked after children. The report highlights the risk associated with the programme and extrapolates the likely costs against income of the council's participation. The budget for Looked After Children is already overspent by £5.1m in the current financial year, so any additional placements would increase this further. Corporately, DCC is facing an overspend of around £9m so the overspend on LAC is not offset elsewhere.</p> <hr/> <p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p><b>CURRENT RISK: HIGH</b></p> <p>The highest risk is that the arrangements impact on the sufficiency of placements and the budget impact associated with the variation between cost and income. This is a very significant issue due to the overall financial position of the county council.</p> <hr/> <p>Other Implications:</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Assessment: The cost of health support to USAC is allocated to CCG's however public health input may be required either through the services commissioned by the local authority or provided by others.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The Cabinet, based on the facts reported in this paper and current budgetary pressures indicate to central government the council's concerns and convey its concern which may lead to withdrawal from the voluntary scheme.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>There are implication for budget and service provision and officers require instruction as the political direction to manage all risks associated with the voluntary scheme.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>(Note: Provide <u>public</u> web links where possible.)</p>
<p>Background Papers</p>	

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

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### 1. Background

- 1.1 Dorset County Council has committed to taking UASC under the National Transfer Scheme and is on a rota with South West authorities for taking these vulnerable children from other local authorities for whom UASC constitute more than 0.07% as a ratio to the child population, for example Kent and Croydon.
- 1.2 the National Transfer Scheme, which is underpinned by the Immigration Act gives Central Government the power to enforce local authorities to accept UASC. If necessary, Dorset could be expected to take up to 54 (0.07% of Dorset's child population) UASC during the life of this parliament. This number also includes UASC who arrive in Dorset spontaneously.
- 1.3 The youngest UASC to date is aged 14 from Eritrea. UASC under the age of 16 have to be placed in regulated placements, either foster care or residential children's homes. This has proven to be a challenge in Dorset as there are very few DCC foster carers who are able to fully meet the needs of UASC in terms of diversity. As a result these children are being placed outside Dorset with foster carer who speak the same language/dialect as these children and better understand their cultural and religious needs.
- 1.4 Dorset County Council is currently accommodating 13 UASC looked after with the following age breakdown, under 16 = 2 and over 16 = 11, we also have 2 care leavers (18+) who were previously looked after. There have been a number of conversations exploring the potential and opportunities to house UASC temporarily to assist and we have concluded that this option is not feasible for a number of reasons.
- 1.5 UASC aged 16/17 years can be placed in unregulated placements and DCC are using International Care Network (ICN), a charity based in Bournemouth, plus other local supported housing provision.
- 1.6 None of the current UASC in Dorset speaks any more than a few words of English. Interpreters have to be located for interviews and for general communication with these children.

### 2. Implications for the Council

- 2.1 To date, Children's Services have been extremely effective in managing the process of supply of UASC coming to Dorset. We have limited options with regarding children who are under 16 due to existing pressure on our placement supply. The consequence is that an under 16 could well be placed with more expensive care options often located outside the county.
- 2.2 Each young person requires an allocated Children's Services social worker. This adds to our already excessive workload for social workers and as numbers increase the pressure will exponentially increase.

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- 2.3 The complexities of meeting Home Office requirements and ensuring that the child's claim for asylum is made in a timely way also places additional pressure on the system which Cabinet will be aware is under increased demand and costs. The work is even more onerous when the child is placed outside of Dorset and the social worker has to travel to see the child in order to meet the usual statutory visiting requirements associated with a looked after child.

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- 2.4 Central government are making payments for each UASC as follows –
- £41,610 per year for under 16's
  - £33,215 per year for 16/17 year olds
  - £200 per week for care leavers
- 2.5 The Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) is in discussion with central Government to review these payments as they do not cover the actual cost of looking after these young people and local authorities will be forced to pick up the shortfall (Care, Social Worker and the Translation Services etc.).
- 2.6 A recent research report by the ADCS has undertaken some national benchmarking about income and costs associated with UASC and we have used that model to assess the likely full cost of UASC if the county council were to come close to the 0.07% population requirement. Table 1 sets out these costs in relation to local authority activity and there is a need to bring to the attention of Cabinet the potential risks and liabilities associated with the UASC programme.

Table 1. Costs associated with 1 UASC with column 3 indicating the costs if we moved towards 0.07% (50). Costs are per annum.

Activity	Cost per UASC	50 UASC
<b>Social Work Management (including assessment, care planning etc.)</b>	£38, 260	£1,910,000
<b>Placement Costs</b>	£50,700 (Average)	£2,535,000
<b>Education (LA Costs)</b>	£4,850	£242,500
<b>Health Costs</b>	Most not to LA	-
<b>Asylum Claim (LA Costs)</b>	£7,800	£390,000
<b>Other costs such as interpreters and advocacy</b>	£4,400	£220,000
<b>Total</b>	£106,010 (Income if all were over 16 =£33,215)	£ 5,300,500 (income if all were over 16 £1,660,750)

Data provided by ADCS Report Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children 2016

- 2.7 It is clear from the above information that the cost borne by the county council far exceed the income provided by government.
- 2.8 It should be noted that the UASC scheme is different in scope and funding from the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme that is being funded by the Overseas Aid budget. (Local authorities will receive a contribution to their costs for five years. £460million of the overseas aid budget will be used by 2019-20 across the statutory sector to assist with first year costs, and around a further £130million by 2019-20 to local authorities to contribute to the costs of supporting refugees up to their fifth year, including an 'extreme cases' fund that will assist with high cost cases. Regional coordination of the scheme is undertaken by Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships (RSMPs)).

### **3. Other Councils Positions**

- 3.1 Although the above information provides average cost associated with those authorities that participated with the ADCS research it is felt by officers working in this area that they are realistic and in some cases conservative.
- 3.2 Some other authorities have ceased cooperating with the current arrangements, most notably Leicestershire County Council who have effectively withdrawn from the voluntary scheme until the full costs associated with UASC are covered by Government financial support. In addition, the current lack of sufficient placements means that UASC are adding to the current paucity of provision that is driving up costs.

### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 4.1 This brief report is to highlight some of the current concerns and risks associated with our engagement with the voluntary scheme and as such offers a range of recommendations and options.
- 4.2 The Cabinet reaffirms its commitment to the overarching principle of the scheme but recognises the potential impact that moving toward a target of 0.07% will have.
- 4.3 Cabinet are asked to note the additional pressures UASC is placing on the care system and supports the measured approach being adopted by Children's Services to manage inappropriate allocations that would not be in the best interest of particular UASC.
- 4.4 The financial, logistical and placement difficulties being experienced in relation to UASC to be noted.
- 4.5 Consider a similar approach being taken by other authorities in relation to UASC that take account of the content of this report whereby the County Council will disengage from the voluntary scheme until such time as the government:
- Meets the full costs of placements and service provision
  - Makes adjustments to the operation of the scheme that eases some of the scheme requirements
  - Or makes participation in the scheme mandatory
- 4.6 That Cabinet makes full representation to Government to address the financial and logistical issues that this report raises.

Sara Tough  
Director for Children's Services