

Name of meeting: Cabinet
 Date: 3 October 2016

Title of report: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children: National Transfer Scheme and the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Programme.

Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No
Is it in the Council’s Forward Plan ?	No
Is it eligible for “call in” by Scrutiny ?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Director</u> & name	Ruth Redfern – 21 September 2016 Sarah Callaghan – 21 September 2016
Is it signed off by the Director of Resources?	David Smith - 12 September 2016
Is it signed off by the Assistant Director – Legal, Governance & Monitoring?	Julie Muscroft - 22 September 2016
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Erin Hill & Graham Turner

Electoral [wards](#) affected: All
 Ward councillors consulted: N/A
 Public or private: Public

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To seek approval for the Council’s involvement in the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) National Transfer scheme, supporting 5 young people initially, and also the Vulnerable Children’s Relocation Programme, resettling a maximum of 20 individuals over the life of the programme.

2. Key points

a) Background

2.1 The crisis in Syria and events in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond has seen an unprecedented number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Europe. Some have reached the UK via Northern France including UASCs. As an example, Kent currently supports 900 UASCs. Other children are still in the Middle East and the government has committed to resettle a number of these vulnerable children. Across the UK there were 3000 asylum applications from UASCs in 2015, this is a 56% rise.

b) UASC National Transfer scheme

- 2.2 The Home Office is asking local authorities to resettle 0.07% of their children and young people's population. Kirklees has a population of 98,348. so the Home Office will be expecting a maximum of 69 UASC to resettle in Kirklees To enable the Council to resettle children and young people successfully considerable planning would need to take place.
- 2.3 Over recent months the Home Office has written to the Directors of Children's Services and communicated with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) on several occasions seeking support regarding the transfer scheme. The Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Migration Partnership, Migration Yorkshire, has been tasked with supporting the regional response to the scheme working with all Councils from the Region. All Assistant Directors have worked together to develop an approach that is fair, equitable and transparent, locally led and enables councils to pool resources and share knowledge and expertise.
- 2.4 Kirklees currently acts as Corporate Parent for 9 unaccompanied asylum seeker young people who are looked after. They are placed in foster care, supported lodgings and in supported accommodation. Currently Kirklees does not have placements to meet the proposed needs. In the short term, Kirklees would have to commission placements from independent fostering agencies and supported accommodation providers. If Cabinet approve the proposal, local and regional work will take place to actively encourage public interest in participating in supporting UASC by providing suitable placements. This will require engagement and momentum from council officers, leaders, partners and the community to deliver change within a short timescale.
- 2.5 The current scheme is voluntary. Should Kirklees Council refuse to join there are provisions within the Immigration Act 2016 to enforce the scheme if local councils do not agree to join on a voluntary basis. The Home Office has made it clear that it would use these powers only as a last resort; however the council would risk losing control of when children are transferred to its area. The Council could potentially be forced to take up to a maximum of 69USAC. Where this number of children and young people would be placed when there is no capacity is a serious concern. Also, there is no confirmation as to whether taking children and young people on an involuntarily basis affects the level of funding Councils receive.
- 2.6 It is recommended that Kirklees offer to resettle 5 UASC in the short term (within the next 6 months) but these young people are likely to be placed using independent fostering agencies/supported accommodation providers and review local capacity and potential placements in early 2017.

c) The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Programme

- 2.7 This resettlement programme was announced by the Immigration Minister on 21st April 2016. The request is for local authorities to resettle 3,000 individuals deemed by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee) to be under the category of 'children at risk'. They will be from the Middle-East North Africa region, and is open to any individuals of any nationality that fit the criteria.

- 2.8 Work will take place regionally with Migration Yorkshire to plan for this programme as with the UASC scheme. If all local authorities across the region accept a fair and equitable number, out of a total of 3000 for the country this would equate to 248 for the region and 20 individuals (4 or 5 households) in Kirklees.
- 2.9 Children will arrive in a family unit, some will arrive with parents and about 5% will arrive with a carer / relative. The programme could run very similar to the previously approved (October 2015) Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP). Nationalities of the families would be different but the process and how the council works to resettle families would be the same. To enable this to work successfully, Kirklees would add an extra 4/6 months on to the SRP so last families would arrive in Autumn 2018 with a minimum of 12 months support.
- 2.10 As we have an existing resettlement programme in place and the numbers are small, it is recommended that Kirklees becomes involved in the VCRP taking a maximum of 20 (4 to 5 households) individuals between now and Autumn 2019.

d) Funding available:

- 2.11 **UASC:** In terms of funding going forward, the Home Office indicated that Local Authorities would receive the following:
- £41,610 per child per year for children aged under 16
 - £33,215 per child per year for children aged 16 and 17
 - £200 per child per week for UASCs who qualify for leaving care support
- 2.12 The level of funding detailed at 2.11 offered by the Home Office only covers the cost of the placement, not the workers that will be supporting the young person (e.g. Social Worker, Personal Advisor, Team Manager), health or education costs. If we are unable to place in Kirklees 'in-house' provision and have to use Independent provision in Kirklees, this will significantly increase the cost of the placement (e.g. £329pw v £758pw) and the funding will not fully cover the placement costs.
- 2.13 **VCRP:** There has been no confirmation of funding for this programme. We are informed it will be the same as the SRP. It is advised that Kirklees only agree to be a part of the programme if the funding mirrors that available for the SRP.

3 Implications for the Council

- 3.1 There are risks and implications for the Council agreeing to take part in the National Transfer Scheme:
- 3.2 The Council could choose not to volunteer to take part in the scheme, however, the Secretary of State could direct participation as a result of the 2016 Immigration Act. As the scheme is new, we currently do not know whether the government would actually enforce this, but given the international and national political interest and significant media interest, it is considered that it would be a significant risk not to be seen to be supporting this vulnerable group. Also as a Region Yorkshire and Humber have signed up to supporting USACs .

- 3.3 Given the Council's current sufficiency position, there would be significant financial implications if the Council agreed to take a high number of USAC. It would also impact on the care and support we provide and in terms of 'our corporate parenting responsibilities'. It would mean that we would need to place this cohort of young people in Kirklees external provision which is a significantly higher cost than internal placements. Work is currently being undertaken to increase the number of internal placements as the number of children requiring care increases, however further work needs to take place to try and generate new placement opportunities for this vulnerable group of young people.
- 3.4 There is a high risk that the level of funding available will not meet the required needs of the children and young people's placement if independent providers have to be used (see 2.12). The success of being able to support UASC's in a cost effective way and support an increase in numbers is dependent on public support and an increase in internal foster care and supported lodgings placements. If there isn't the support and a significant increase in foster carers and supported lodgings placements, children and young people will need to be placed in independent provision and the costs will remain at a significantly higher level than the national transfer scheme is offering.
- 3.5 Despite the financial pressures this 'ask' will make on Council resources, there is a moral imperative to support vulnerable and displaced young people. In arriving at the proposed recommendations; consideration has been given to the implications with regard to a potential directive from the Home Office and the reputational risk this presents to the Council. In Kirklees there is a strong commitment to improve all outcomes for children and young people as articulated within the vision for the Health and Well Being Strategy and it has also been recognised that UASC make a valuable contribution to the community as well as creating a budget demand. The challenge to meet the rising demand for placements is not underestimated and is a key priority for the Family Support and Child Protection Service this priority is being driven by the Chief Executive and DCS through the Development Board.

4. Consultees and their opinions

Kirklees Council Leading Members and Directors,

5. Next steps

- a) To continue to work to a regional model for the UASC programme and the VCRP
- b) To begin work on a targeted recruitment campaign to recruit supported lodgings providers for this cohort of looked after young people.
- c) Jointly plan the UASC, SRP and VCRS programmes.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That Cabinet agree to:

- a) the Council being involved in the UASC national transfer scheme.
- b) 5 UASC's being resettled in Kirklees in the next 6 months.
- c) review the Councils capacity to increase UASC numbers early 2017 following a targeted local and regional recruitment campaign.

- d) in principle resettling 20 individuals as part of the VCRP programme and manage this in line with the Syrian resettlement programme. But, only if the level of the funding is the same as is available for the Syrian resettlement programme
- e) Subject to (d) above start accepting VCRP families from January 2017 onwards.
- f) any amendments of Kirklees Council's involvement in the UASC Transfer and VCRP programme being delegated to Chief Executive.
- g) the Council's involvement in both programmes is kept under review as outlined in the considered report.

7. Cabinet portfolio holder recommendation - n/a

8. Contact officer and relevant papers

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9. Assistant Director responsible:

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