

Corporate Parenting Panel

29 September 2023

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Update



Report of Lesley Baldry, Service Manager, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council, and

Sharon Davey, Strategic Manager Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the progress of the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team.

The update includes:

- The Home Office Transfer Scheme;
- The structure of the UASC Team;
- Young people's involvement in service development;
- Multi agency development;
- Events.

Executive summary

- 2 The UASC Team was formed as a pilot team from February 2022. The team's focus is to provide consistent specialist support, care and guidance for those young people who have come to Durham under the National Transfer Scheme or through spontaneous arrivals. We have seen an increasing number of young people needing our support and therefore will provide an update on the work of the team.

Recommendation

- 3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to receive and note the update report.

Background

- 4 The UASC Team was established in February 2022 due to the increased demand for social work capacity and caring provisions for UASC referred to Durham by the Home Office Asylum Scheme. Until this point UASC had been allocated social workers throughout the Children Looked After Service.
- 5 Team Manager Nathan Head was appointed in February 2022 and the team was set up as part of the Care Leaver Service.
- 6 There are currently 69 UASC in our care and 28 Care Leavers, the Care Leavers moved to the UASC Team from the Care Leavers Teams in May 2023. There are currently an additional 8 children being placed which will bring the number of young people in our care to 78.

Structure of the team

- 7 The team consists of:
 - One team manager;
 - Three and half social workers (One social worker is based in London);
 - Four Young Peoples Advisors.

Developments

- 8 Having a focussed team allows training and development to take place, some areas this has been achieved in are:
 - Age Assessment Training;
 - UASC/Care Leavers care planning training;
 - Development session on the voice of the UASC and what support they would like;
 - Improving practise and assessments for UASC;
 - Refugee Family Reunion;
 - Legal Frameworks with regards to UASC.
- 9 We receive developmental and training opportunities from the North East Migration Partnership.

- 10 We are now focussed on trauma informed training and will be attended the Healing Spaces session. We focus on recovery from the start of placing young people and highlight this in the assessment process and children in care review.
- 11 Nathan Head is the Team Manager, he attends the regional group where we learn from the experience of other authorities, including Redcar and Cleveland who also have an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) focussed team.
- 12 Sharon Davey, Strategic Manager attends the refugee and resettlement meeting to support in partnership working to provide support and services for our young people.
- 13 The UASC multi agency group meets monthly. This allows multi agency information to be shared and consideration to be given to how we work together, including health, education and the voluntary sector to meet this group of young people's needs and support both physical and mental health recovery.
- 14 We are seeking to develop a new HUB with a focus on UASC, this will be a team base and allow all day access for support and advice. Two UASC young people are helping us with the development of this HUB from the beginning of the project.
- 15 We now have welcome packs established and are thankful of the support from Elected Members as part of their corporate parenting role to make this possible.
- 16 We now have UASC young people represented on the Children in Care Council.
- 17 Community and celebration events continue including for Ede, Cricket days and weekly football sessions.



Challenges

- 18 It is difficult to find a foster home for young people under 16 in the North East of England. The team manager is working with our fostering recruitment team to try and target possible foster carers. We have 13 young people in foster homes in the South of England and employ an agency social worker in London to be accessible for these young people.
- 19 Durham continues to take a high percentage of UASC young people in comparison to our regional neighbours and although the referral cycles have recently slowed down, we are expecting cycle 29 to start shortly and the referrals numbers will be 29 UASC for the rest of this year. We are seeking to build capacity within the team and continue to work with local supported housing providers to develop provisions.
- 20 There has been a delay in the Home Office processing Asylum claims which means that we continue to fund young people's accommodation and daily living costs beyond them being 18 years old.

Conclusion

- 21 The team has had a positive quarter with good community links form and stable homes for pour young people.
- 22 There are developments for the future for our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Team such as aligning our work in the Care Leavers Hub and building on our placement options for our young people.

Background papers

- None.

Other useful documents

- None.

Authors

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Young people who come into the care of DCC under her NTS are cared for under the Care Act 2004 and Children Act 2004.

Finance

DCC are awarded funding for the young people's accommodation needs.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Climate Change

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

Details of the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) team are included in the body of the report.

Accommodation

DCC's CSC provide accommodation for the young people.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

Not applicable.