

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team Update

Corporate Parenting Panel

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Terminology

- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but have been separated from their parents or carers. While their asylum claim is considered, they are supported by a local authority.
- The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) has been established to enable the safe transfer of UASC in the UK from one local authority (the entry authority from which the unaccompanied child transfers) to another local authority (the receiving authority). The transfers are usually from Kent and Croydon Home Office Intake Units where young people are often placed in temporary accommodation upon arrival.
- Spontaneous Arrivals is where the child/young person arrives in the UK by their own means and presents to the local authority in an unplanned way. They are usually encountered by public/police in the first instance. The local authority in which the child first presents is then responsible for their care.

At a glance – where we are at

- We are in the process of becoming a permanent team following our foundation in February 2023
- There are currently 84 UASC in our care and 54 Care Leavers supported within the service
- Since July 2023 we have taken 58 young people as part of the NTS
- Our threshold for capacity in line with the scheme stands at caring for 98, under 18 years old young people, at any one time
- There have been 4 spontaneous arrivals since October 2023
- We have young people from 15 different countries who we support
- There are 17 Children Looked After with Leave to Remain status
- There are 37 Care Leavers with Leave to Remain aged between 18 and 25
- There are 25 young people in foster homes out of our area. The distances of those placed out of area range from South Shields to Oxford

What's working well?

- We have one young person who has graduated from university and is now in employment within the NHS. We have another young person at university who is due to graduate and one planning to attend this year.
- Links have been made with Morrison Busty Depot, a DCC facility that has a plant nursery, and they are supporting sessional employment for young people with Leave to Remain
- Community and celebration events continue including for Eid, cricket days, and weekly football sessions. Sessions have taken place with other Care Leavers such as a recent Peer Mentoring Event.
- We now have a UASC young people represented on the Children in Care Council. He is involved in numerous groups such as the New Venture Fund and Experts from Experience Group. He is to become a Peer Mentor.
- There is a toolbox of information for young people in other languages as well as a welcome pack for when they arrive in our care
- A multi-agency approach to supporting these young people remains prominent as well as ensuring an overview of the regional approach

Challenges

- 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
- It is unknown whether the recent change in government will lead to amendments in legislation such as the Illegal Migration Act which states that people who have entered the country "illegally" will forgo the right to claim asylum – this currently has a big impact on the young people we support
- There have been significant concerns about 3 young people who we support as they have had frequent missing periods and there has been concerns about them being victims of exploitation
- It is difficult to find a foster home for young people under 16 in the North East of England
- Supporting the emotional and mental health needs of young people is difficult as they find these feelings difficult to talk about and there are few resources to support their trauma recovery – furthermore, they must tell their stories/traumas to other professionals as part of on-going legal processes in respect of claiming asylum such as solicitors and the Home Office

What's been going on

