

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

UASC

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Introduction

- There are three ways in which Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children are referred to us and become Children in our care.
 - Spontaneous arrival in our area.
 - National Transfer Scheme.
 - Young people placed in hotels in our area who then present as being under the age of 18.
- They are transferred directly to Through Care by the Family Front door.

The landscape and data

Looked after children who are UASC; **82**
(As of 31.12.22) In January 2022 there were **29**.

Care leavers who are UASC; **74**

Percentage of our Under 18 population; **0.065%**

Placement types – breakdown by internal and external.

16 and 17 Year olds;

WCF properties – 7

External – 44

18 Years plus; (ongoing immigration/ asylum claim)

WCF placements – 5

External – 14



The National Transfer Scheme (NTS)

- The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) protocol for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC, and mainly referred to in this document as unaccompanied children) has been established to enable the safe transfer of unaccompanied children in the UK from one local authority (the entry authority from which the unaccompanied child transfers) to another local authority¹ (the receiving authority).
- This was to alleviate the pressure on certain Local Authorities who had a high UASC population eg Kent.

The scheme began in 2016 and was initially voluntary and arranged between local authorities

- A voluntary Rota was initially developed from and was overseen centrally. Mandated from 15th February 2022.
- Initial thresholds; those local authorities where USAC is 0.07% of their child population (or above) would not be expected to accept transfers.
- Increased to 0.1% August 2022. Further changes at this time - transfers expected within 5 days (previously 10).

Young people in dispersal hotels.

- Increasing numbers of young people being placed in hotels by the home office and subsequently disputing their age.
- E.g. The Fownes hotel in Worcester - hotel used to accommodate asylum seeking adults (men). 21 Looked After Children from here. 2 young people were assessed to be under 16 and placed in foster care, visually younger and reporting to be under 16. 19 others supported living.
- The home office will have initially viewed these young people to be adults, however there is no evidence of Merton compliant age assessments and therefore we have a duty to consider their age.
- Those that presented as significantly over 21 we're not accommodated and advised to seek legal advice. If the initial assessment is that they could be under 21, we have a duty to support them as young people and undertake a full age assessment.
- Moving forward in 2023, the Home Office will support Local Authorities who accommodate young people from hotels with £15,000 per young person and we are seeking to build our offer to UASC.
- We have opened Hillview one of our properties with 8 UASC places as of January 9th 2023. Run by our Outreach team.

How do we support UASC in WCF?

- Those assessed to be under 18 (or if uncertain under the age of 21) are accommodated by WCF
- Foster care for under 16 and supported living for those over 16.
- Support offer is the same as for any of our Looked After Children. Virtual school, IRO etc.
- UASC social worker - works with solely UASC and supports/guides other social workers when working with UASC and undertaking assessments.
- Age assessment training offer – rolling training and offered to all Social workers in Through Care and other parts of service. Moving to doing these assessments internally more, previously commissioned out.
- Cultural needs considered - supporting young people to access a network of young people from their culture. All young people have access to equipment or resources to maintain their religious or cultural beliefs.
- Outreach support for those young people in supported living placements.
- NRM (National referral Mechanism) where they may be concerns around trafficking. The home office will make some referrals at point of arrival.
- Specific policy for missing UASC.

Supporting the Health of our UASC

- Health colleagues referred the significant number of young people in the Fownes hotel when screening and registering the residents of the hotel.
- There are additional public health considerations with young people from different countries and health services take the lead on this.
- Our UASC are supported with physical and emotional health and wellbeing in the same way as any other in our care; Initial and review health assessments.
Focus on emotional health and wellbeing and support.
Accessing services to help them deal with trauma from previous experiences/ their journey.
Supporting to build a community with others from the same ethnicity.
Supporting to access information around family via the Red Cross.

