

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00, Tuesday 8 November 2016

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Item number	7.10
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	City-wide

Executive summary

This report seeks Committee approval to respond positively to an urgent request from the UK Government to resettle a small number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) accepted by the UK following closure of the Calais refugee camp by the French authorities.

Members are also asked to note the UK Government's request that the Council consider participation in a UK-wide UASC dispersal scheme and that development work, including financial modelling, is currently underway to inform a further report that will be brought to committee, hopefully before Christmas.

Links

Coalition pledges	P36
Council outcomes	
Single Outcome Agreement	SOA1 to 4

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Recommendations

- 1.1 Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee is recommended to:
- agree that Edinburgh should offer to accept a small number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who have been resettled in the UK following the closure of the Calais refugee camp – the number to be determined in discussion with Communities and Families and Safer and Stronger Communities staff
 - note that the city has been asked to consider involvement in a national UASC dispersal scheme and that detailed financial modelling is currently being undertaken with a view to bringing a report back to Committee, hopefully before Christmas.

Background

- 2.1 The Home Office has asked local authorities across Scotland, including the City of Edinburgh, to consider participation in a proposed UK-wide UASC dispersal scheme.
- 2.2 Discussions regarding the UK scheme are being coordinated through a working group convened by COSLA, on which the Council is represented. A proposal relating to this scheme is scheduled for discussion at the November COSLA Leaders' meeting.
- 2.3 In advance of this discussion, Scottish local authorities have been asked whether they can respond to the need to resettle a number of UASC in the UK following the French authorities' closure of the refugee camp at Calais.

Main report

- 3.1 The UK Government is seeking to establish a national dispersal scheme to resettle:
- UASC already in the UK being looked after by authorities in London and the South East of England estimated to be around 5,000 in number
 - 3,000 UASC who will be identified under a new refugee resettlement programme, which will be the subject of a further report to Committee – the

- basis on which this new scheme will operate is similar to the existing Syrian Resettlement Programme, in which the Council is already a participant
- a number – still to be identified – of UASC currently in Europe in response to the Lord Dubs amendment to the Immigration Act.
- 3.2 Across all strands of proposed UASC resettlement, refugees are likely to be male and aged 16 – 18, although we can expect a smaller number of UASC with different age and gender characteristics.
- 3.3 Separate to discussions regarding a national dispersal programme, in the last ten days, the UK Government has issued an urgent request for local authorities to consider resettling a small group of UASC following closure of the Calais refugee camp by the French authorities.
- 3.4 Discussions with operational colleagues in Communities and Families have suggested Edinburgh has the capacity to offer a small number of places immediately whilst discussions regarding participation in the wider national dispersal scheme continue. Edinburgh’s proposed response to the national proposal will be the subject of a further detailed committee report.
- 3.5 In considering the city’s response to this immediate request, members should be aware that whilst discussions in the COSLA working group suggest there is a strong desire across Scotland to engage with the proposed scheme, there are significant operational challenges to overcome. There are also widespread concerns regarding impacts on services, which are already highly pressured and the potential for consequent reputational, financial and political risk.
- 3.6 To date, COSLA has not been able to agree a transfer protocol with the Home Office, which it considers appropriate to Scotland, although work continues with a view to presenting a proposal to November’s COSLA Leaders’ meeting. In the absence of a national protocol, a small number of Scottish local authorities have started to explore unilateral arrangements with the Home Office.
- 3.7 In Edinburgh, a meeting was held in mid-October with existing partner accommodation providers to explore potential capacity to respond. The conclusion of this meeting was that whilst there is a real will to respond – and potential capacity to do so – the cost of participation will be significant.
- 3.8 Our previous experience of supporting UASC suggests we will start with no reliable background knowledge about the young people and their needs, and will therefore require to undertake our own assessment. Consideration is being given to a model of care entailing a period of assessment (potentially up to three months) followed by foster care or group accommodation options. The cost of any of the options exceeds the funding offered by the Home Office.

- 3.9 More detailed financial modelling is currently being undertaken and will be included in the further committee report previously referenced. Estimated costs are included at this stage in the financial impact assessment section below to give Members a sense of the anticipated scale.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The key measure of success will be that any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children resettled in Edinburgh feel they have integrated successfully into the city in terms of their home, social and professional/educational lives.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The UK Government is offering the following funding for new cases from 1 July 2016:

Category	£ Daily Rate (maximum)	£ Annual rate(maximum)
Under 16	£114.00	£41,610
16 to 17	£91.00	£33,215
Over 18	£200 per week*	£10,400

This is a significant increase to the level of funding provided prior to this date. However, initial consideration of the operational and associated financial implications of supporting UASC to the number being suggested in the proposed UK-wide dispersal scheme indicates that even this increased funding will be insufficient to meet the Council's additional costs.

For example, based on our experience of seeking foster placements for this age group, it is highly likely the placements will have to be purchased from the independent sector. The cost of foster placements for 11 – 18 year olds, purchased from an independent agency on the national Scotland Excel contract, ranges from £36,712 to £62,140. The range of the potential shortfall per case is shown below:

Age Category	Annual Rate of funding	Foster Costs		Variance to funding	
		Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
11 to 15	£41,610	£36,712	£60,008	(£4,898)	£18,398
16 to 17	£33,215	£40,768	£62,140	£7,553	£28,925
Over 18	£10,400	£40,768	£62,140	£30,368	£51,740

The figures above show that foster care costs alone, without the possible additional costs of a 3 month assessment period in a residential unit, education, language support, translation support, etc. are in most cases significantly in excess of the funding being offered.

By comparison a supported accommodation placement is estimated to cost £60,000 a year and a place in a residential unit £120,000 a year. The residential cost becomes an incremental cost if the Council has to purchase this or the anticipated number of UASC requiring this support necessitates the opening of a new unit.

Detailed work is being undertaken to identify the operational models available, which primarily include residential care, foster care and supported accommodation. Work is also being undertaken to understand the implications for Continuing Care and Throughcare and Aftercare. Estimated associated costs will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

5.2 The current proposal is to accept a small number of UASC ahead of considerations to become part of the national UASC dispersal scheme. The service anticipates each UASC would receive a 3 month assessment period in a residential unit. The step following assessment will depend on age, with the expectation that under 16s would be considered for foster care and over 16s for supported accommodation.

5.3 The table below shows the potential annual financial implications of these placement types based on a 15 year old.

	Independent Foster Care		Residential Care	Supported Accommodation
	Minimum	Maximum		
Incremental Cost	£36,712	£60,008	£120,000	£60,000
Funding	£41,610	£41,610	£41,610	£41,610
Variance	(£4,898)	£18,398	£78,390	£18,390

In all cases it is anticipated that some form of additional support will be required, but costs cannot be estimated with any degree of certainty due to the unknown nature of the needs of the young people.

5.4 Once actual costs are known, the implications will be factored into the subsequent report to Committee on the UK-wide dispersal scheme.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to foster good relations between different groups. Any risks in this regard will be mitigated through careful project coordination with Community Safety, Police Scotland and third sector colleagues as well as development of proactive and reactive media strategies.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The recommendations and contents of this report have been assessed in light of the public sector equality duty described within the Equality Act 2010 and the various human rights duties placed on the Council. Initial assessment has indicated that participation in this scheme is in line with the Council's obligations. Careful consideration will need to be given to ensuring good community relations are maintained, and any illegal discrimination, harassment or victimisation of relocated persons are addressed.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered. Relevant Council sustainable development policies have been taken into account.
- 8.2 The proposal in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because it promotes personal well being and social inclusion, and creates equality of opportunity for the most vulnerable in our society.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Consultation and engagement continue to take place with statutory and third sector partners to develop Edinburgh's response to refugees and asylum seekers settling in the city.

Background reading/external references

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Links

Coalition pledges	P36 - Develop improved partnership working across the Capital and with the voluntary sector to build on the “Total Craigroyston” model
Council outcomes	
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 - Edinburgh's Economy Delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all SO2 - Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health SO3 - Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric
Appendices	None