

## **1. Background**

### **UASC/ UASC Care Leavers and NRPF**

1.1 This report sets out a summary of the council's duties to UASC and UASC Care Leavers.

1.2 The report also aims set out the support offered to NRPF families.

## **2. Legislative background**

2.1 The council has a legal duty to accommodate unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under 18 under the Children Act 1989. Such children become eligible for leaving care services at 18 when the council then has a duty in relation to them until they are able to establish themselves independently. Often to become independent, their immigration status needs to be resolved. Alternatively, they may face a Home Office decision to not be granted indefinite leave to remain, once they achieve their 18th birthday creating social challenges for them to access public funds and remain in the UK. Knowing that this may be the case some care leavers cease to maintain contact their workers in Haringey's Young Adults Service. This places them at risk of exploitation and the service has evidenced the work to work with the through other partners to maintain contact even if they decline to inform the advisors of the address the address and people that they may be living with.

## **3. Haringey's UASC – November 2019**

3.1 There are currently 10 (UASC) under the age of 16 in the Looked After Children's Service. All the UASC are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Haringey more recently like many other Local Authority will seek care orders for UASC, who arrive seeking asylum under the age of 14. During the last 12 months we have accommodated 2 young people as UASC who were 14 when they started their looked after journey with Haringey. Once they reach 18, they are eligible for care leaver services.

3.2 There are 13 young people who have become UASC care leavers to Haringey in the last rolling year. They were all formerly Looked After and were also classified as Asylum Seeking Children.

3.3 Our UASCs and care leaver population is growing reflecting larger numbers arriving in the UK.

3.4 Our UASCs and asylum-seeking care leavers come from a range of countries including: Syria, Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Albania. The numbers and countries of origin of UASCs vary significantly upon the stability of countries across the world. In recent years there has been a high volume of Albanian & Eritrean young men placed in London. It is a challenge supporting young people from countries where education and health services have been poor developed. It is also a challenge supporting them when they have experienced significant trauma such as being trafficked. Many have suffered trauma and some have witnessed, or participated in acts of war, leaving them with multiple and complex emotional and mental health support needs that can be challenging for Haringey agencies to meet.

## **4. Referral Routes**

4.1 There were/are two potential referral routes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The most common route is for them to be referred through the reinstated Pan London Rota. The rota was established over 15 years ago through a Pan London agreement that local authorities (LA) would take turns in supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children claiming to be 16/17 years of age. This was to ensure the fair distribution of young people to LAs in London. The rota was a voluntary arrangement. This arrangement was replaced with the National Transfer Scheme, in September 2017. The NTS protocol was created to enable the safe transfer of unaccompanied children from one local authority (the entry authority from which the unaccompanied child transfers)

to another local authority (the receiving authority). Only unaccompanied children that meet the definition of a UASC, as set out in the Immigration Rules, are eligible to be referred to the NTS. The transfer protocol was intended to ensure that unaccompanied children can access the services and support they need and was also a voluntary agreement made between local authorities in England to ensure a more even distribution of unaccompanied children across all local authorities. Challenges with the Home Office mechanisms for managing the volume of needs national meant that the London LA's have agreed to revert to the Pan London rota until the NTS remedial adjustments are completed.

4.2. Over the last 8 months significant numbers have presented to Tottenham Police station. The police response has been cautious subjecting UASC to police powers under s.46 of the Children Act 1989. Since April 2019, discussions with senior leaders has encouraged the police to examine the need to execute their s.46 duty of UASC. The HSCP will receive a report on the outcome of their considerations.

4.3 The increase in the presenting UASC has generated pressures with the CSC system. Specifically these are:

1. Higher percentage of 16-17 LAC proportionally
2. Higher proportion of male LAC as majority of asylum seekers are male
3. Increased demand for foster carers willing and able to work with UASC
4. Increase in missing episodes following refusal of asylum post 18th birthday

4.4 The second referral route is for UASC young people to present directly to children's social care in Haringey who accommodate them unless a local connection can be determined elsewhere. Over the last 8 months there has been a higher proportion of UASC presenting to Tottenham Police Station. Since April 2019 we have had 22 UASC's directly presenting themselves. Our threshold target is now 0.08% (49 cases) of which we exceed for the last 8 months, however we have recently reduced to 48 cases and consequently have accepted a case from the rota referral. In addition, more recently supporting Croydon by accepting responsibility to care for 1 additional UASC. Haringey has not yet moved to capping the number of UASC offered support.

4.5 Haringey has a well-developed multi agency approach to supporting UASC with effective systems across Health including First Steps the LAC CAMHS leads, Police, MASH partners, Emergency Duty Team, Substance misuse providers and Housing and Education. This is largely the result of the investments in Haringey's Young Adults Service. The YAS works well with the MASH and EDT accommodating UASC within 12 hours of being notified of their arrival in Haringey.

4.6 The funding received from the Government does not cover the total costs. This is even more the case for UASC care leavers of whom we have 85 over the age of 18 years old amongst our total care leaver population of 405 young people (open and active cases).

## **5. Support to assist young people with their legal status**

5.1 The Young Adults Service,(YAS), has meet with the Coram's Children's Migrant Project to develop a bespoke advice service for Unaccompanied Minors and Care leavers in Haringey. The project advice line would be extended to provide a high-level service to Haringey social workers and would provide case reviews and guidance on the immigration process.

5.2 The YAS workers attend a wide range of core and specialist training to keep up to date with the legislation to enable young people who are eligible to achieve legal status. The team has received training on the Immigration Act 2016, NRPF, the emotional needs of UASC, and supporting LAC and Care Leavers seeking Asylum and Child Trafficking.

5.3 The YAS Team in conjunction with young people have delivered training to Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers in relation to immigration, asylum process, expectations, and help to improve understanding of the complex issues that face separated children in the UK. The training was well received and there are plans for this to be delivered more frequently.

## **6. Repatriation**

6.1 The YAS Team would like to focus on supporting eligible and consenting UASC post their 18th birthdays for return to their country of origin prior to and following any Home Office refusal and provide the young person with reference letters, and certificates of achievement, 1 month living expenses based on the country of origin if they are returned. This is particularly important given the challenges the young people may face upon their return. This practice has been highlighted as an example of good practice and being modelled in other Local Authorities.

## **7. Settled Status and Citizenship**

7.1 Haringey has been successful in securing Home Office funding to support vulnerable community groups to apply for settled status. With effect from the 1st August 2019, structured work will commence to afford priority to UASC and children who are EU Nationals to be supported to secure settled status. There are 27 young people earmarked to benefit from this funding.

## **8. Education**

8.1 Haringey ensures all UASC Looked after children attend local schools to their placements. A significant proportion of our UASC looked after children go on to higher education and do well.

8.2 For those where school is not applicable Haringey ensures our UASC and Asylum care leavers have access to ESOL as soon as they are placed. We have strong links with colleges in borough and ESOL providers such as UK Unsigned. Haringey has high aspirations for our care leavers and ensuring our young people are building on skills for their future.

## **9. Housing**

9.1 Haringey have been successful in working closely with an accommodation provider to secure housing for both UASC Looked After Children and UASC Care leavers in borough to ensure our young people are able to benefit both from peer support, and being placed together where cultural needs can be met. By ensuring our migrant children are placed together we have been able to undertake direct pieces of work to meet their assessed needs, but also to encourage their attendance at the UASC Hub, specifically set up for newly arriving UASC's.

9.2 We also have 3 UASC care leavers currently Staying put with their foster carers, and we work closely with preferred accommodation providers who have extensive years of experience in working with UASC's and where need has been assessed we also access appropriate IFA carers to ensure appropriate cultural matches.

9.3 Haringey fostering service also have a small number of carers who specialise in UASC young people and although the carers are also approved to take non UASC, the carers have been able to build a specialist knowledge in home office and immigration status issues. As a result, the carers preference is UASC young people. The carers advocate on the young person's behalf and often accompany the young people to their home office appointment. Carers are able to communicate by but using google translate and as a result able to support the young person's needs.

## 10. Financial implications

10.1 Haringey receives grant funding for UASC children under 18 and some contributions to Asylum seekers over 18. The grant funding received does not sufficiently fund the London living costs for accommodation needs. This is the subject of a review.

## 11. NRPF – children and their families.

11.1 There are currently 86 children, (48 families), whose parents are NRPF, open to the Children's and Families Social Care NRPF Team. The remit of NRPF Team:

- To undertake s17 CA 1989 Assessments
- Provide Accommodation for NRPF/Destitution Families
- Make subsistence payments (monitor)
- Undertake 8 weekly statutory Child in need visits
- Undertake 3 monthly Child in need reviews

11.2 In addition the Team also assist families with the following

- Educational vouchers for under 4 years.
- Access to food banks
- Access to Children Centre's
- Access and support to engage with Domestic Violence services
- Co-ordinating of EHCP's
- Progressing applications for leave to remain via the NRPF Connect Web tool.

11.3 The NRPF Team and senior managers have set out a proposal to use the NASS rates as the benchmark for awarding subsistence payments.

The rates are

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Weekly payment</b>
Parents, where both are living with the child	75.50
Lone parent living with the child	37.75
Child aged 16-17	37.75
Child aged 4-15	37.75
Child aged 1-3	40.75
Child aged under 1	42.75

11.4 Support will be paid at the foregoing rates for the parent/s and for the first, second and third child or children only. For larger families with four or more children, the Council will decide on assessment, the council will decide on assessment the level of subsistence payable for the additional child or children having regard to the total payment to the family, and if so will determine the level thereof, the final decision to be that of the Head of Service.