

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)

to

People Scrutiny Committee

on

29th November 2016

Report prepared by: Diane Keens, Group Manager

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children National Transfer Scheme

Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay
A Part 1 Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To update Scrutiny on Southend's response to the National transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

2. Recommendations

That the report be noted and agreed.

3. Background

The Government published an interim national transfer protocol on the 1st July 2016 to enable the safe transfer of unaccompanied children from one UK local authority to another. Local Authorities will be expected to accept young people under the scheme until they reach a ceiling of 0.07% of UASC to population of children in their given area as estimated through the figures published by the Office for National Statistics in the mid-2014 population estimates. For Southend this equates to around 27 young people.

- The Government introduced the National Transfer Scheme in July 2016
- An agreed position was reached by the Eastern Region to join the scheme in September 2016
- There is currently work being undertaken regionally to introduce a rota system to support the transfer process which will begin on the 23rd November 2016
- There is on-going work regionally to look at current UASC and to ensure that they are being appropriately managed on the basis of current regional placement. Southend will take on responsibility for any young people placed in Southend by any of its regional partners prior to receiving young people directly from the central office.

- It is expected that Southend will begin to receive young people from the NTS during December 2016.
- Southend currently has 4 UASC and are in the process of accepting 5 from Thurrock and potentially 2 from Suffolk who are already placed in Southend. As yet we are awaiting information from Essex as to numbers placed in Southend.
- Southend is supporting one other young person who transferred directly from the Calais camp, who came to Southend to join family and therefore did not become a looked after child.

4. Other Options

Southend has chosen to work with the Eastern Region on a solution to this issue. This will ensure that any young person who is currently within the Region is appropriately managed by the local authority for the area in which they currently reside. Southend could have chosen to work independently on this matter and to receive young people directly from the central transfer scheme, however it was felt that to initially look at those UASC already within the region would ensure that their needs were best met locally without the need for an additional move.

The Region will begin to accept young people directly from the central team, should, following the current exercise and working of the rota, there be insufficient young people to ensure that each local authority moves to a 0.07% position.

It has been identified that the Eastern Region is a net receiver of young people through the various ports and airports within the region and some of the local authorities within the region are well above their 0.07%. Once the movement of responsibility has occurred, further movement will take place within the region as part of the NTS to bring equity within the regional partners.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

There is currently a national deficit on the number of placements available to local authorities through Private, Voluntary and Independent providers. By taking this regional approach, we will ensure that young people are supported locally whilst preventing further moves away from communities where they have begun to settle.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

It is believed that this approach will ensure that young people placed in Southend will be appropriately supported and in future, Southend will offer help and support to new entrants to Britain alongside their regional partners.

6.2 Financial Implications

For Southend to reach the cap of 0.07% we would need to receive approximately 27 UASC into the Borough as looked after children.

The NTS scheme attracts Government funding which equates to £114 per day for a young person under 16 years and £91 per day for a young person between 16-18 years of age. (This funding may not meet the full cost of placement and other costs).

There is limited fostering capacity locally due to an increase in care numbers over the past 18 months.

There is a national shortage of fostering placements within the private sector which may impact on the local authority's ability to place young people received in appropriate and local provision.

If young people are placed within the private fostering sector, there will be additional financial impacts on the local authority.

6.3 Legal Implications

None. The young people welcomed into Southend will be supported by staff to seek the appropriate legal status to enable them to remain.

6.4 People Implications

Southend will require 1.3 additional social workers; 0.3 reviewing officer and ultimately 0.5 personal advisor posts to support the additional young people through to 21 years.

It has been agreed that social worker posts will initially sit within the 16+ leaving care team given that the majority of entrants will be over the age of 15 years. This will enable a level of speciality to be developed.

6.5 Property Implications

None directly to the Council at this stage, however, it will be necessary to find appropriate housing for the young people entering Southend to ensure that they are supported both on entry and into adulthood. Most will initially enter either foster care or supported accommodation, due to their age, many in the next 18 months will turn 18 years and will therefore require appropriate accommodation within the area that they have settled.

6.6 Consultation

None at this stage

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

Southend will need to develop services to ensure that the young people entering Southend are fully supported and integrated into the local community. It is expected that young people will come from a number of countries including Syria; Afghanistan and Eritrea.

6.8 Risk Assessment

We are only looking at a small number of young people entering Southend which should not pose any major risk to services apart from placement provision.

The main risk at this stage is to identify appropriate placements for young people coming to Southend under this scheme. Whilst Southend have successfully increased the number of in house foster carers over the past 2 years, the number of young people placed with these carers has increased from 128 in 2014/15 to 207 in 2016/17. Whilst this is very positive for Southend children, it does mean that increased capacity has been used, leading to an increased use of private sector placements.

6.9 Value for Money

As stated above, Southend will continue the work that has been started to develop support services within the local community such as supported lodgings and supported housing to ensure that wherever possible costs are met through the central NTS.

There is an issue as stated under finance where, should we need to place within the private fostering sector, that costs will not be fully met by the scheme.

Any young person received under the NTS will qualify for £200 pw leaving care costs when they turn 18 years and whilst this may not fully cover costs it is a change from the current scheme whereby no leaving care costs are met.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

We will need to closely monitor the community impact to ensure that the young people are integrated into the local community.

6.11 Environmental Impact

None.

7. Background Papers

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children November 2016
- Interim National Protocol for UASC 2016/17 July 2016

8. Appendices

None.