

Report to Cabinet Member for Childrens Services

Decision to be taken on or after 3 July 2019

Decision can normally be implemented at least 3 working days after decision has been signed.

Cabinet Member Report No. CS04.19

Title: Policy Position - National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Date: 26 June 2019

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Local members affected: ALL

For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444

Summary

This report sets out Buckinghamshire County Council's proposed policy position with regards to the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

Recommendation

Accept up to 2 UASC transfers per month, with the maximum number of UASC being looked after equivalent to 0.07% of our child population.

This commitment will be subject to the Council receiving all necessary information including age assessments for the children and young people in question. This commitment will also take into account the number of UASC spontaneous arrivals in Buckinghamshire, as these numbers can be unpredictable and unexpected increases in arrivals can have a significant impact on other young people within Buckinghamshire due to the budgetary impact.

All proposed transfers will be reviewed by the Director of Children's Services, who will retain the right to refuse transfers based on the points above and wider service requirements.

This policy position will remain valid for one year and will be reviewed by the new Buckinghamshire Council following its implementation in April 2020.

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) has been in place to enable the transfer of unaccompanied children from one local authority (the entry authority) to another local authority (the receiving authority). The transfer protocol forms the basis of a voluntary agreement made between local authorities in England to ensure a more even distribution of unaccompanied children across local authorities.

2. Buckinghamshire County Council has been committed to accepting transfers from the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children since December 2016.

3. The cost of supporting UASC children and young people continues to be higher than the funding provided by central government. Similarly to other councils across the country, Buckinghamshire County Council faces significant financial pressures in this policy area. While we appreciate and welcome the recent increase in funding rates, until this funding mismatch is fully addressed, local authorities up and down the country will continue to face unfunded pressures at a time of already significant financial constraints.

4. However, the Council recognises the need to play our part in supporting the dispersal of UASC, particularly given the significant pressures faced by local authorities such as Portsmouth, Kent and Hillingdon. As such, Buckinghamshire County Council commits to: **Accept up to 2 UASC transfers per month, with the maximum number of UASC being looked after equivalent to 0.07% of our child population.**

5. This commitment will be subject to the Council receiving all necessary information including age assessments for the children and young people in question. This commitment will also take into account the number of UASC spontaneous arrivals in Buckinghamshire, as these numbers can be unpredictable and unexpected increases in arrivals can have a significant impact on other young people within Buckinghamshire due to the budgetary impact.

6. All proposed transfers will be reviewed by the Director of Children's Services, who will retain the right to refuse transfers based on the points above and wider service requirements.

7. This policy position will remain valid for one year and will be reviewed by the new Buckinghamshire Council following its implementation in April 2020.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

8. The Council does not need to adopt a formal policy position, however doing so would provide transparency and certainty in terms of the Council's policy position on this issue.

C. Resource implications

9. Not applicable.

D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment

10. Not applicable.

E. Legal implications

11. Not applicable.

F. Property implications

12. Not applicable.

G. Unitary Council

13. This policy position will remain valid for one year and will be reviewed by the new Buckinghamshire Council following its implementation in April 2020.

H. Other implications/issues

14. Not applicable.

I. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views

15. This report sets out a corporate policy position which affects all divisions.

J. Communication issues

16. Not applicable.

K. Progress Monitoring

17. Not applicable.

L. Review

18. The policy forming part of this decision will be reviewed after April 2020.

Background Papers

Not applicable.

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on 2 July 2019 This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk