



Leaders' Committee

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Item no: 8

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Summary This report updates the Leaders' Committee on the progress of London Councils' lobbying in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and recent Government announcements.

Recommendations Leaders' Committee is asked to note this report and note that a report will be brought back to Leaders when the Home Office makes further announcements in relation to a review of the National Transfer Scheme.

NHS Collaboration

Background

1. Leaders' Committee in July 2019 discussed a report on policy and funding obstacles facing the system for accommodating and supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and potential lobbying priorities.
2. This report updates Leaders on London Councils' lobbying activity and recent announcements in relation to funding for former UASC Care Leavers
3. The full report to Leaders' Committee from July 2019 is available [here](#).

Lobbying Since July 2019

4. At the Leaders' Committee in July 2019, members –
 - Agreed that London Councils take steps to seek urgent additional financial support for London boroughs to ensure that the London rota remains functional during the forthcoming summer pressures;
 - Supported lobbying by London Councils to seek cross-departmental focus, involving MHCLG, the Home Office and Department for Education;
 - Agreed that sustained lobbying be undertaken by London Councils in respect of UASC and former UASC Care Leavers;
 - Supported exploration of intensifying this issue politically, legally and in media terms
5. In parallel to the Leaders' Committee report, London Councils published new analysis of the unfunded financial pressures associated with the vital care boroughs provide to UASC and former UASC Care Leavers. This analysis found that –
 - There were approximately 1,800 UASC LAC across all 33 London boroughs in 2018-19, representing at least one third or more of all UASC in England.

- Between 2016/17 and 2018/19, the number of UASC accommodated in London increased by 17%.
- London Councils research estimates that there were approximately 2,900 former UASC Care Leavers across all 33 London boroughs in 2018-19. Spend on former UASC Care Leavers was £24.5 million in 2018-19, an estimated increase of 39% since 2016-17.
- In 2018- 19, the total estimated funding gap across London for UASC was £14.1 million and £17.8 million for former UASC care leavers. The total estimated funding gap in 2018-19 was therefore £31.9 million.

6. The London Councils analysis included a number of lobbying asks of Government, including a call to:–

- Urgently invest an additional £32 million in UASC funding to London boroughs to ensure that the London rota remains functional during the forthcoming summer pressures.
- Support work by local government to develop viable improvements to the national arrangements for the transfer of UASC.
- Take cross-departmental action, involving the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government (MCHLG), the Home Office and Department for Education, to:
 - i. Make the case for full funding of costs incurred in the support of UASC and former UASC Care Leavers.
 - ii. Reach agreement on reform to the National Transfer Scheme in order to put it on a functional and sustainable footing.

7. Since the meeting in July 2019, London Councils has undertaken the following lobbying activity –

- Written to the Minister for Immigration to lobby for support of the recommendations noted in paragraph 6 above.
- Written on a similar basis to senior officials in the Home Office and Department for Education.

- Corresponded with the Children's Commissioner for England to highlight UASC pressures facing London boroughs and the potential impact on children's outcomes.
 - Worked with officials in MHCLG to convene a cross-government workshop in February 2020 involving borough Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services and officials from MHCLG, Home Office and the DfE.
8. At the cross-government workshop in February 2020, officials acknowledged that a number of the issues that London Councils and individual boroughs were raising were under consideration and confirmed that an announcement would be made in the coming weeks about funding arrangements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Officials also noted that a consultation on reform of the National Transfer Scheme had been due to start in March or April. The consultation was delayed as a result of the pandemic. The Home Office remains committed to undertaking the consultation and a new date is expected to be set for this over the summer.

Recent Developments

9. On 9 June 2020 the Minister for Immigration Compliance, Chris Philip MP, announced an increase in financial support for councils who look after children. Funding will be to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children leaving care. The new rate of £240 per person per week, will replace the previous rates of £150 and £200 per week. This will accompany a targeted 25% increase in funding for local authorities who are looking after the most unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
10. London Councils is continuing to process analysis of the benefit to London boroughs, made more complex by unknown proportion of former UASC care leavers in receipt of the £150 legacy rate (applicable to UASC who entered the system in 2016).

11. Analysis remains ongoing and is not yet conclusive. However, it is possible that London boroughs may benefit from an increase in funding of over £10 million, and depending on a range of assumptions nearer £20 million. However, the assumptions in London Councils analysis will require further assurance, so the figure in this report should be treated with caution at this stage.
12. Finally, and unrelated to the funding announcement, in recent months there have been proportionately large numbers of asylum seekers, including UASC, arriving on the South Coast, while numbers have been lower than usual elsewhere, including London. This has led to a specific request from the Home Office for placements through the NTS from Kent and Portsmouth. Some London authorities have responded to this request.

Recommendations

Leaders' Committee is asked to note this report and note that a report will be brought back to Leaders when the Home Office makes further announcements in relation to a review of the National Transfer Scheme.

Financial Implications for London Councils

None

Legal Implications for London Councils

None

Equalities Implications for London Councils

None