



Home Office



Department
for Education



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

To all Local Council Leaders

24 November 2015

Dear Council Leaders,

DISPERSAL OF UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

We are writing to set out the ongoing funding arrangements to support the voluntary scheme for the dispersal of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) from Kent to other local authorities.

The crisis in Syria and events in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond have seen an unprecedented number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Europe by sea and several thousand people in Calais trying to reach Britain illegally. As you will be aware, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of UASC arriving in Kent. There are now nearly 1,000 UASC in Kent County Council's care, of which nearly 300 have had to be placed in other local authority areas. This has placed significant pressure on the Council and its social services. We are extremely grateful to all those in Kent for the excellent way in which they have responded to these pressures, but we are clear that a national response is needed to support the county and to ensure UASC get the support they need and are appropriately safeguarded.

Since the summer our officials have been working on a voluntary dispersal scheme in support of that aim. We are grateful to the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) for their continued support in these efforts. On 28 July, Kent wrote to all 151 other local authorities in England with social services responsibilities to request assistance under s27 of Children Act 1989. We recognise the efforts of the 19 local authorities who have responded positively and have accepted UASC into their care from Kent. However, to date only 42 of the nearly 1,000 children in Kent's care have been transferred into the care of another local authority. This is simply not enough. We are clear that local authorities with the capacity to support UASC, who can be some of the most vulnerable children in care, should do so.

The Government is committed to meeting reasonable additional costs for local authorities who take on responsibility from Kent County Council for the care of UASC. The Home Office wrote to ADCS on 3 August to confirm that day rates of £114 for UASC aged under 16 and £91 for UASC aged 16 and 17 would be available to all local authorities taking UASC from Kent, through to the 18th birthday of that child. This arrangement was initially for a three month period, but we can confirm that it will continue until the end of the financial

year. Each UASC accepted from Kent aged under 16 will thus attract £41,610 per annum and each UASC accepted from Kent aged 16 or 17 will attract £33,215 per annum.

Discussions with the Local Government Association and other local authorities have also highlighted concerns about the costs that fall later on in relation to their status as former UASC care leavers, for which central government currently pays a contribution of £150 per week for eligible cases. In recognition of those concerns, we are writing to confirm that the funding available for local authorities accepting responsibility between now and the end of the financial year for a UASC from Kent who then goes on to attract leaving care support will be increased from £150 to £200 per week for as long as the former UASC continues to be eligible for leaving care support. This compares favourably to the average cost of supporting care leavers of £120 per week reported in the recent National Audit Office report into care leavers.

We believe this total funding package represents a very generous offer.

As you will be aware, the amount of support provided to local authorities in respect of care leavers is reviewed annually. We have asked our officials to begin a full review of UASC funding to inform decisions about the 2016/17 rates.

We hope that the national dispersal scheme will remain voluntary and operated by local authorities. To make an offer of support or for further information, please email the Kent UASC dispersal team at UASCdispersal@kent.gov.uk. However, we have also been considering whether these voluntary arrangements should be backed up by reserve powers so that we are well placed to avoid any repeat of the situation which has arisen in Kent this summer and to ensure that dispersal is truly national. We hope to be in a position to provide further detail on that shortly.

We are aware of local authority concerns about the burdens placed on them from having to support migrants without status who qualify as former looked after children. On 11 November, James Brokenshire wrote to the chair of the Local Government Association to advise that he had tabled amendments to the Immigration Bill to prevent adult migrant care leavers who have exhausted their appeal rights and have established no lawful basis to remain here from accessing local authority support under the Children Act 1989. The amendments make alternative arrangements for accommodation, subsistence and other support to this group before they leave the UK.

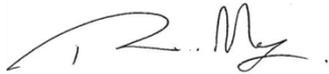
We are committed to reducing the burdens placed on local authorities and we have asked our officials to continue the dialogue started with local authorities to see what more we can do in respect of the additional costs associated with UASC care such as higher education costs.

In addition, the Government is committed to solving the migrant problem in Calais. We have a strong relationship with the French and significant improvements have been made to the security of the port and Eurotunnel

sites over the last year. We need to continue doing all we can to discourage children and other migrants from making dangerous journeys to reach the UK.

We believe the additional funding to support the voluntary dispersal scheme provides the necessary reassurance for local authorities to participate. James Brokenshire and Edward Timpson will shortly be hosting a roundtable discussion with local government colleagues to review the initial response to this letter, to discuss any remaining issues relating to implementation of the national dispersal scheme and to ensure that we are doing all we can to safeguard the welfare of UASC.

This letter is being copied to Chief Executives, Lord Porter of Spalding CBE and Alison O'Sullivan.



Rt Hon Theresa May



Rt Hon Nicky Morgan



Rt Hon Greg Clark