

Date: 20 August 2020

Dear Colleagues,

You will have seen the recent news coverage of the difficult and ongoing situation in Kent regarding the arrival of migrants. The arrivals have been increasing over the past few months and we have continued to see unprecedented numbers of vulnerable young people needing their care. This situation has now created an urgent situation in Kent such that they are no longer able to accept any new children into their care as of 4pm on 17 August. We are deeply grateful for the continued support local authorities have shown but further emergency support is needed for the following across all parts of the UK:

- Offers of placements in your area
- Offers to take full responsibility under the Children Act 1989 for these young people
- Offers to supervise young people placed in your area
- Offers to accommodate young people directly from the Kent Intake Unit in Dover (transport can be provided)

You will appreciate that we would not make this request at this time were it not for the exceptional and urgent nature of the current situation and we are grateful in advance for the support and assistance that you are able to provide. **We would be grateful if you could respond as quickly as possible, and no later than Thursday 27th August, with what you are able to do to help.**

We recognise that we have been here before, and ***the current situation cannot continue***. In parallel to these more immediate requests we will therefore be consulting on a more sustainable long-term future model for the National Transfer Scheme to avoid this situation arising again. The focus will be on creating a sustainable rota system that will take account of the broader range of support local authorities provide across the whole of the asylum system, including care leavers and the dispersed population. We intend to launch that consultation by 28 August. This will include a broad and comprehensive approach to look at all the issues facing local authorities hosting the greatest number of UASCs – particularly those who are over their 0.07% allocation and those with significant numbers of former UASC care

leavers and will seek views on including care leavers in the 0.07% ratio. We will also work with national partners as part of the comprehensive spending review to capture pressures on councils.

On the question of age, we ask that all authorities with UASCs they suspect are over 18 are given urgent age assessments. The Home Office can assist with the practicalities of this and offer support in relation to any subsequent legal challenges. We are acutely aware of the challenges around age assessment of UASC and associated litigation and are exploring with you how we can further improve the approaches to assessment of age, so that only those people assessed by experts as being under 18 are being accommodated by local authorities. We thank you in advance for your engagement in these consultations. In addition, we are assessing the cost impact of age assessment litigation to consider what further support can be offered in this regard. It would help us in targeting this support if you could let the Home Office know how many UASCs who you believe are over the age of 18 in your local area. In order that we can help as quickly as possible, you will have received an age assessment questionnaire recently. It would be very helpful if you could return that as soon as possible. **In any event, it would be helpful if you could let us know by Thursday 27th August how many UASCs you have who you believe are highly likely to be over 18, and if you would like help from the Home Office to urgently age-assess those.**

We are also keenly aware of the additional challenges that supporting an unaccompanied child entail. As the Home Office continue to roll out their phased interview restart schedule for asylum claimants further development work is taking place at pace regards the restart of children's interviews. The Home Office are keen to restart children's interviews at the earliest opportunity but must take care to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is in place, that is tested and proven before committing to set timeframes. We will share further information on this process via Strategic Migration Partnerships.

We are aware of the additional complication the current quarantine measures for arrivals from France implies for taking children into your care directly from Kent Intake Unit. Councils offering places to newly arrived UASC will have to provide in quarantine accommodation for two weeks in accordance with public health advice. We are urgently considering whether it is possible to establish quarantine facilities within the standards required by The Care Standards Act (2000). However, this will take some time and will not be solution for arrivals over the coming days that Kent urgently needs. We will keep you updated of any developments on this.

We are also continuing to work with national partners to address current pressures in the dispersal system, particularly around hotel use, in recognition of the need to find joint solutions to pressures across the whole system.

Home Office colleagues will continue to work as they currently do with the dedicated Strategic Migration Partnership leads to facilitate the transfer process under the National Transfer Scheme. In order to achieve swift transfers, please contact Pernille.Ware@homeoffice.gov.uk & Nicola.Blacoe2@homeoffice.gov.uk as well as UASCNationalTransferTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk directly with the support that you are able to provide or if you have any queries. If you are unable to support we would

appreciate if the reasons for this can be fed in to the NTS consultation. ***If you can provide support but need additional assistance to do so (for example transport etc.) please also let them know in your response, and we will do everything we can to support you.***

Yours faithfully,



Abi Tierney
Director General, HM Passport
Office and UK Visas & Immigration



Frances Oram and Sophie Langdale
Directors, Children's Social Care – Practice and
Workforce, Department for Education



Cllr James Jamieson
Chairman of the Association



Jenny Coles
ADCS President 2020/21



Alex Skinner
Director, Local Government Finance
Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government