

## **Manchester City Council Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 21 June 2023

**Subject:** New Arrivals and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

**Report of:** Strategic Director of Children and Education Services

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### **Summary**

Manchester as a diverse and economically successful city recognises and celebrates the contributions of all communities. One such community is those who are seeking asylum which have in recent years increased in part due to the Home Office establishment of Dispersal Hotels.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children have traditionally 'spontaneously' arrived in Manchester. However, attributed to the mandating of the 'National Transfer Scheme' (NTS) and identification of children through the wider offer to dispersal hotels the number has exponentially increased. This has required Manchester City Council Children Services to increase its capacity to provide a safe and effective offer to these particularly vulnerable children. Notwithstanding this working in partnership with other public and voluntary sector services Manchester Children Services offer a culturally sensitive and trauma informed bespoke offer that is both responsive to the needs of UASC and support them to be safe, healthy, happy and successful.

The slide set attached to this report highlights Childrens Services and partners response the step change increase of Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC) coming into Manchester.

### **Recommendations**

Scrutiny Committee members are invited to:

- (1) Consider the impact of the increase in volume UASC coming into the city and the wider socio-economic impact.
  - (2) Endorse the decision that Manchester will 'opt out' of the National Transfer Scheme and will refer young people into the scheme as a response to our increase in number of UASC into the city, whilst acknowledging that this decision can be reviewed as young people naturally 'age out' of the system.
  - (3) Recognise the services response, whilst acknowledging the strength of the partnership work that has wrapped around our young people, in a 'child first' approach.
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**Wards Affected:** All

**Environmental Impact Assessment** - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion** - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

The New Arrivals team alongside partners has delivered culturally attuned services to our unaccompanied children and young people. Priority is given to linking in our young people into established communities within Manchester as per an individual's needs. The service is responsive to ensuring communication aids are in place and use of interpreters is embedded to enable all young people to express their wishes and feelings.

Children and young people where possible are culturally matched to foster carers where possible or preferred providers of supported accommodation where there is proven experience in supporting young people from different cultures and where English isn't a young person's first spoken language.

Education partners have been responsive in supporting young people access ESOL in a timely way – whilst acknowledge pressures due to the high number requiring ESOL.

Health partners have a specialist UASC 'looked after' nurse who supports the physical, emotional and mental health of our children and young people. Initial health assessments are completed with all unaccompanied children and young people.

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Effective support for vulnerable unaccompanied children and young people is critical so they can connect, support, contribute and access a thriving and sustainable City.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Ensuring our vulnerable unaccompanied children and young people are given the opportunity to access immediate support enables a timely assessment of need to ensure the right support at the right time is provided.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Building a trusted relationship with children and young people helps builds their resilience, recover from trauma which is needed to enable their potential to be achieved.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Improving outcomes for unaccompanied children and young people dispersed across the city helps build and develop communities.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Children's Services and partners have responded to the increase in our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children and young people. As a partnership we constantly strive to deliver good outcomes for this vulnerable group, despite risk factors detailed in the wider slide set. We support young people to gain legal permanence in order to be able them to remain in their communities and contribute to the continuing growth in the city.

Full details are in the slide set, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

### **Financial Consequences**

Please see below

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Local Authorities have a legislative responsibility to protect and support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and as such are ascribed a 'looked after' status and are particularly vulnerable.
- 1.2 An unaccompanied child is entitled to the same local authority provision as any other looked after child, however, is likely to require help and support to lodge an asylum claim and access specialist legal advice in relation to their asylum claim.
- 1.3 Since February 2022 all Local Authorities with a Children's Service's Department were directed to participate in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and the threshold set for the number of children a local authority must accept increased to 0.1% of their total child population. In Manchester the figure of 0.1% equates to approximately 123 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- 1.4 Presently there are 185 UASC children this makes up 13% of the looked after population in Manchester. Additionally, 507 (16 to 25) UASC children and former UASC children make up 28% of Manchester's' care leaving (16 to 25) population; the second highest nationally.
- 1.5 At the point a Local Authority reaches its threshold they are eligible to not participate in the NTS and enter the scheme as a 'referrer'. Up until recently Manchester has not done this. However, given the significantly increased numbers, capacity within the service and suitable accommodation the difficult decision to start referring children into the scheme was made in March 2023. Notwithstanding this, to date none have been accepted into the scheme by the Home Office.
- 1.6 Since 2019 the Home Office has developed the use of 'dispersal' hotels which have been adapted to respond to the growth in adult and families seeking asylum in the UK. Since December 2022 there have been 3 such hotels opened in Manchester, the most recent opening in May 2023. Whilst it is not anticipated children seeking asylum are placed by the home office in such arrangements, there has been an impact service each time a hotel has opened with increasing numbers claiming to be children who had been identified as adults by the home office when initially processed by the home office. Whilst 43 in total, it is noticeably since December 2022 there have been 30+ such claimants who have subsequently been identified and assessed to be children.
- 1.7 When UASC are identified the Home Office provide financial remuneration. However, this is not sufficient to cover the total cost and is being raised at national level via Association of Directors of Children Services, Local Government Association and Regional Strategic Migration Partners. The following table illustrates the direct and indirect financial implications.

Annualised Costs	Costs	Per UASC (£)	Per UASC Care Leaver (£)
Social Work	Staff salaries (Team Manager, Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, administrators, agency staff etc.), Referral process, Age Assessment processes (including cases that do not lead to LA care), Travel, Business Support	£3,631	£2,703
Management and Oversight	Strategic Leads	£452	£452
Placements and Support (Allowances)	Placement finding services, placement costs (staffing, payments to foster carers, fostering panels, training), Miscellaneous payments (personal allowance, birthday and religious festival payments etc.), Admissions	£44,921	£25,493
Education	Virtual school support - therapy and summer school. PEP are funded from LAC Pupil Premium and not included in costing.	£808	
Health	Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments, Public Health Nursing Services. (Notional currently). Costs incurred by LAs directly in support of UASC health, not including costs incurred by CCGs or NHS England	Costs could not be tracked	
Legal	Age assessment challenges, Judicial Reviews, Care proceedings	£902	
Miscellaneous	Interpreters, advocacy and children's rights, funding for VCS services and support	£184	£184
Risk	Young People Supported pending Home Office Approvals	£2,100	
<b>Total Local Authority Costs</b>		<b>£52,997</b>	<b>£28,831</b>
Income	Annual income for young person - Home Office	£52,195	£14,078
	LAC Pupil Premium - DfE	£808	
	<b>Difference</b>	<b>£6</b>	<b>-£14,754</b>

1.8 The supporting slide set will highlight how the service has responded to this increase and future projections.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 The New Arrivals Team was established by Children Services in Manchester to respond to UASC, to develop a specialist skill base and offer a bespoke support and intervention to UASC children and young people. The Social workers in this team are highly skilled in age assessment to ensure legal compliance is adhered to and understanding of the trauma and experiences of children seeking asylum.

2.2 There is a virtual team of public and voluntary sector organisations that link to the service and collectively offer a sensitive health, education and therapeutic service that is co-ordinated through assessments of the children's needs and their respective care plan, welcoming and settling children and young people into the city.

## **3.0 Service Offer**

3.1 In response to the increasing numbers of UASC arriving in Manchester which predominantly appears to be via the Home Office National Transfer Scheme or identified via 'dispersal hotels' opposed to spontaneously arriving, Manchester City Council Children Services has increased the resource and capacity to ensure a safe and effective service offer.

3.2 Experience tells us, if our UASC needs are clearly identified, the right offer is put in place these children thrive and go on to be successful. Currently 16% of our former UASC make up our university care leaver population.

3.3 Manchester is one of few local authorities in the North West which is over its 'threshold' and overall has the highest number. Whilst this is a challenge responding and meeting the needs of UASC, it is positive that other GM and regional LA's look to Manchester for good practice and processes.

3.4 As 'looked after' children Manchester's UASC are integral to how we celebrate them and their counter-parts achievements. The next event is due to be held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023. In addition, we provide and include them in a series of bespoke activities such as;

- National Refugee week, where we will be celebrating and supporting our young people access events across the City.
- The service has co-ordinated a UASC Greater Manchester football tournament that is being hosted at Burnley FC.
- Supporting young people attend the Refugee Horizon's Festival where there is a range of activities and events, music, film, food and cultural workshops.

3.5 In addition, the service deliver learning events for the wider children services and recently included our first young person to secure British Citizenship (pre 18) will be speaking about their journey and experiences.

### 3.6 Education/learning Offer

3.6.1 During the 2022-23 school term period, the Virtual School has been overseeing the education, employment, and training of 250 unaccompanied young people. Of these, 41 are of school age, largely in Years 10 and 11 and of which 32 are settled into school places. The other nine young people, who are Year 11 and have come into our care during the summer term, have been provided with tuition and work has been undertaken to identify an appropriate Post 16 destination.

3.6.2 To date there have been 217 UASC aged 16 and 17 during this school year with additions to this number each week. Of these 217 young people, 88 have now turned 18. Of the 129 young people currently aged 16 and 17, 96 are in education or training provision. The majority of the remaining 33 young people, who have either come into our care most recently or who have complex support needs, have a confirmed Post 16 destination for September. The Virtual School continues to work with social workers and personal advisers to provide interim support and to identify appropriate destinations for any unaccompanied young people without an education or training provision. For example, some of our young people are accessing the Prince's Trust summer scheme to help them bridge the gap between now and September.

3.6.3 An emerging challenge across Greater Manchester during 2022-23 has been securing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) educational provision. This is attributed to the providers being unable to sufficiently increase their capacity. As a result, Manchester's Virtual School, MCC Post 16 Lead and other Local Authority colleagues from across Greater Manchester are in close communication with Greater Manchester Providers about ESOL sufficiency planning for the coming year and beyond.

### 3.7 Health Offer

3.7.1 Manchester has an established and positive relationship with the specialist Looked After Children Nurses and provide a culturally sensitive and trauma-informed offer. As a result, 100% of our young people have a health assessment within timescales of them initially arriving in Manchester with 97% of young people accessing a dental check. This is positive as we know the older young people are generally more reluctant to access dental care, it is the partnership and support that the young person gets initially that means they consent to looking after their basic health needs on arrival.

### 3.8 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Engagement

3.8.1 MCC currently commissions two non-profit, charitable organisations to accommodate and support our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking (UASC) Children aged 16+. These 'block contracts' provide us with 80 cost-effective



placements. Young people reside in 1, 2 and 3-bed accommodations and receive floating support to help them develop independence skills, get registered with a GP and dentist, enrol at college and help with their asylum claims. Both providers deliver fantastic outcomes for our young people, ensuring they build the skills required for moving into their first tenancy once they get status. It has been good to see young people forming lasting friendships and going onto house share within social housing.

3.8.2 There are two new services currently out for tender which will help us strengthen the supported accommodation offer for our UASC population. The first is an additional block contract that will see our capacity increase by a further 40 units, similar to the two services detailed above.

3.8.3 The second is a new model referred to as the 'New Arrivals Hub', which will ensure young people receive the best possible start in Manchester. The Hub will provide accommodation and specialist support for up to 12 young people as they initially present in the city. This new approach will allow social care more time to care plan for our young people and eliminate the risk of us using out-of-area and often expensive emergency placements. After a period of around 6 weeks, children social care will have had the time needed to find the most suitable move-on placement which meets the young person's wishes and needs, and ensures our internal offer (The Lodge, Supported Lodgings, Beehive and UASC Block Contracts) is utilised.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

4.1 Scrutiny Committee members are invited to:

- (1) Consider the impact of the increase in volume UASC coming into the city and the wider socio-economic impact.
- (2) Endorse the decision that Manchester will 'opt out' of the National Transfer Scheme and will refer young people into the scheme as a response to our increase in number of UASC into the city, whilst acknowledging that this decision can be reviewed as young people naturally 'age out' of the system.
- (3) Recognise the services response, whilst acknowledging the strength of the partnership work that has wrapped around our young people, in a 'child first' approach.