

**Proposal for accommodating child refugees and asylum seekers in Carmarthenshire**

**Presented by: Syrian Refugee Task Group and Partners**

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**Overview**

The need for every authority in the UK to accommodate child refugees and asylum seekers has been highlighted. There are a range of programmes and ways in which child refugees and asylum seekers may re-settle in the UK.

**1. Syrian Resettlement Programme, (SRP)**

Carmarthenshire is aiming to resettle 60 families over the five year duration of the programme. To qualify for resettlement, individual family members are assessed for vulnerability. Although single people may qualify under the scheme, most case referrals comprise families. Families arrive under a five year Humanitarian Protection Visa, giving access to work, education and a range of benefits. The Home Office provides funding for the initial year, with a reduced level of funding over the following four years. There are also other funding pots available, (for example special cases funding and additional ESOL funding).

The project is managed by the Carmarthenshire SRP Multi-Agency Task Group. EYST provide a caseworker support service and Syria Sir Gar provide community support.

The SRP is not directly a children's scheme, however, children are being resettled with their parents and siblings in Carmarthenshire with the delivery of the programme.

**2. Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS).**

This scheme is for vulnerable children and has the same level of funding as the SRP. The scheme is administered by the Home Office Syrian Resettlement Team who also administer the SRP. The scheme is open to children from the Middle East and North Africa who have registered as refugees in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. The Home Office is currently appealing for Local Authorities to take part in the VCRS. The scheme is open for 3,000 people. Most children who qualify will arrive with parents or guardians.

The scheme is for those deemed to be 'Children at risk' as identified by the UNHCR, e.g.; those with specific medical needs or disabilities; survivors of or those at risk of violence, abuse or exploitation including sexual and gender based violence; children at risk of harmful traditional practices such as FGM or forced marriage; children without legal documentation, children in

detention, children at risk of losing their refugee status, and children at risk of not attending school, children associated with armed forces or groups, facing the risk of child labour or already working, and child carers. The best interest process is being developed with NGOs

The VCRS runs in exactly the same way as the SRP via the same Home Office Team and with the same systems and funding. As Carmarthenshire is already delivering the SRP, the VCRS would be a relatively easy scheme to deliver. It is noted that children and families may not be Syrian, therefore different cultural and integration needs may exist. This may include steps to avoid isolation and possibly specific language support.

### **3. Dub's Amendment**

This was an amendment to the Immigration Act to accept an unspecified number of asylum seeking children from Europe. On the 8/2/17, UK Government issued a statement that announced the effective closure of the scheme. Around 200 children arrived after the closure of the Calais camp. These have been reunited with family members in the UK where relevant and appropriate or otherwise entered in to the National Transfer Scheme as UASC. Another 150 children will arrive from Greece, France and Italy in the spring.

An agreement has been reached between Welsh Government and the WLGA on expenditure of £350,000 across the social service regions.

Clarity is required if children will enter the NTS and require support as UASC or whether children would be resettled as part of Family Reunion. It may be possible to support children under UASC, (please see below), although the timeframe may be challenging. There is a remote chance that children may arrive in Carmarthenshire as part of the Family Reunion process, again clarity is required on how this is communicated to the LA.

4. **Other resettlement schemes.** Children may arrive with families under the other current resettlement schemes in the UK. The numbers who arrive under these schemes is relatively low and none of the schemes are in operation in Carmarthenshire. These schemes comprise the Gateway Protection Programme, Mandate Refugee Scheme and the Afghan Interpreters' Scheme.

### **5. Family Reunion**

Children may arrive having applied for Family Reunion. This is where dependents, (children under 18), and spouses / partners who formed part of the family unit before their sponsor fled their country claim asylum to join family members in the UK. There is no charge for Family Reunion application and there is also no additional funding that can be claimed by the local authority.

## 6. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children, (UASC).

- a. **Spontaneous arrivals.** There are no major ports or airports in Carmarthenshire; therefore it is unlikely that unaccompanied asylum seeker children will be encountered by the Home Office at port of entry. If an unaccompanied asylum seeker child was encountered by the Home Office at port of entry in Carmarthenshire, the child would be taken into the care of the County Council. Unaccompanied asylum seeker children may be encountered by the Police in a number of circumstances. This may include situations of child sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, criminal exploitation and domestic servitude. Unaccompanied asylum seeker children may also be encountered along the major road arteries, including the extension of the M4 corridor and A40 to the major ports in Pembrokeshire. Again, any unaccompanied asylum seeker children encountered in these circumstances would be taken in to the care of Carmarthenshire County Council as the 'entry local authority.' Currently there are 4 unaccompanied asylum seeker children in foster care or supported lodgings in Carmarthenshire who arrived spontaneously.
- b. **Independent Fostering Agencies.** Other local authorities place unaccompanied asylum seeker children via IFAs with independent foster carers. There are currently no unaccompanied asylum seeker children with Independent Foster Carers in Carmarthenshire. Local authorities tend to make use of IFAs where they are unable to find fosters carers, supported lodgings or supported accommodation to meet their duties as an entry local authority. Additionally, a number of Local Authorities may be disproportionately impacted by numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeker children. The /placing local authority is still responsible for each out of area unaccompanied asylum seeker child placed in Carmarthenshire via an IFA. The number of UASC within Carmarthenshire from other authorities are therefore out of the direct management control of our County Council, but would be equally entitled to education, training and accommodation within Carmarthenshire once they are post 18
- c. **National Transfer Scheme, (NTS).** The Home Office is requesting Local Authorities to register with the scheme. The NTS has been put in place to facilitate a more equitable distribution of unaccompanied asylum seeker children across local authorities. Local authorities in the south east of England have been disproportionately impacted by unaccompanied asylum seeker children as 'entry local authorities.' Kent has between 800 to 900 unaccompanied asylum seeker children. The following paper outlines how the NTS may be delivered in Carmarthenshire, especially outlining the services and partnerships that are in place locally.

## **Scoping, costs and feasibility of Carmarthenshire County Council participating in the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children.**

### **Countries of Origin and Numbers**

Last year there were 3,206 asylum claims from unaccompanied asylum seeker children in the UK. This represented 9% of all asylum claims. The top three countries of origin were

- Afghanistan - 709
- Eritrea - 645
- Albania - 425

Currently, the focus of support services has been on delivering the Syrian scheme. From the above, it can be seen that wider cultural and linguistic requirements are likely to exist with accepting unaccompanied asylum seeker children under the NTS. Careful planning will be required to ensure social bonds within the children's ethnic and national context as well as integration into the wider community.

The Home Office formula for equitable distribution of unaccompanied asylum seeker children across the UK is 0.07% of the child population of any given area. At the last Census, Carmarthenshire had a child population of 37,642.

$$37,642 \times 0.07 / 100 = \mathbf{26 \text{ children.}}$$

This optimum number of 26 needs to be balanced against the number of arrivals per year, the building up of age cohorts and the estimated number of spontaneous arrivals that the local authority would be responsible to take into care. Numbers will be limited by the availability of services and support, primarily foster carer capacity, supported lodgings or supported accommodation. The number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children placed with IFAs in Carmarthenshire may also be considered alongside the calculation of 26 children.

## **Proposal for accommodating child refugees and asylum seekers in Carmarthenshire**

Currently, Carmarthenshire County Council has insufficient foster carer capacity to accommodate unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).

**This paper proposes that Carmarthenshire County Council develop a service for UASC and child refugees over the age of 16 by:**

- Recruiting 'host families' for UASC over the ages 16 and 17 similar to supported lodging providers that the other young people access in Carmarthenshire through a SLA with Llamau and links with Syria Sir Gar.
- Providing direct community inclusion support via a keyworker model provided by EYST.
- Developing an inclusive EOTAS education programme in partnership with Coleg Sir Gar.

## Rationale

- Many 16-17 unaccompanied asylum seeker children have a high level of independence and would fit well into supported lodgings and the above support provision.
- The costs of providing this service through a supported lodging model can be reimbursed through existing Home Office Payments.

**Under 16s.** With the growing public awareness and also support from community organisations like Syria Sir Gar, it may be possible to recruit foster carers. This would help to assist with placing the most vulnerable young unaccompanied asylum seeker children with foster carers. The resettlement of under 16s could be a consideration after provision for 16-17 year olds has been implemented. This will give time to identify potential foster carers and further develop support structures.

## **Cost reimbursement for 16 and 17 year old UASC**

The local authority can claim a minimum of £91 per day **£637.00 per week** to cover their accommodation and support needs of UASC.

*Reimbursement 2016/17 rates:*

Category	£ daily
Legacy UASC Under 16	£95.00
Legacy UASC 16/17	£71.00
National Rate UASC Under 16 (UK arrivals from 1 July 2016)	£114.00
National Rate UASC 16/17 (UK arrivals from 1 July 2016)	£91.00
Kent Referrals UASC Under 16 (UK arrivals up to 30 June 2016)	£114.00
Kent Referrals UASC16/17 (UK arrivals up to 30 June 2016)	£91.00

*\*Subject to paragraph 4.2, payment for each eligible UASC will be at the rates set out in the table below. A "legacy" case is a UASC who entered the UK on or before 30 June 2016*

This amount can be used to:

- Provide reimbursement to host families for UASC.
- Contribute to the additional costs of expanding the number of support workers with EYST.
- Provide the leaving care allowance of £57 per week per UASC.
- Cover basic social worker and admin costs as UASC are classified as looked after children.

## **Recruitment of host families for Supported Lodgings**

In Carmarthenshire vulnerable young people between the ages of 16-25 can reside in supported lodgings. These are host families who agree to have a young lodger and provide an element of care and support for them.

The local authority has an existing service level agreement with the charity **Llammau** to recruit supported lodging providers including vetting, DBS, training and ongoing

support. It is proposed that we ask Llamau to actively recruit host families for UASC ages 16 and 17.

Syria Sir Gar, EYST and Llanelli Multicultural network have established a very positive group of community volunteers and have twitter and facebook pages that could help advertise the need for host families and put them in touch with Llamau.

The average cost of weekly allowance for supported lodgings is £130-£150 per week. Young people are expected to contribute towards these costs and provide some of their own meals. We would offer **£150.00 per week** per young person.

There may be a possible need to make a financial contribution to Llamau per young person per week to support any additional management and support costs from Llamau. Estimated at **£100 per week** per host family.

### **Allowances for unaccompanied minors**

Young people under the age of 18 who are care leavers receive **£57 allowance** per week to live on. They have to contribute £20 to their host family to cover utility costs and buy their own clothes and toiletries, travel, run a mobile phone and fund any extracurricular activities with the remaining £37.

Unaccompanied minors will need to be provided with this allowance in order to support their independence.

### **Access to education and training**

Coleg Sir Gar can provide an intensive ESOL course for unaccompanied minors. Parents within our Syrian Refugee families could also attend as could the older children from these families for whom a full time school placement may not be appropriate.

Additional funding is available for the establishment and delivery of ESOL courses and this would be explored with Coleg Sir Gar and the Syrian Refugee Project Lead.

An allowance in the region of **£100.00** per young person per week could be made to Coleg Sir Gar to contribute towards activities, training costs, staffing costs and resources to develop and deliver an appropriate curriculum.

To provide **ESOL** for 6hrs @£50 (to cover costs of teacher plus on-costs and overheads) would be £300 per week. Funding is ample to cover these costs and would be able to provide for 6-8 students in a class.

### **Additional specialist support in the community**

An estimated **£100.00** per young person per week could contribute towards purchasing additional support workers from **EYST** with whom the authority currently has a service level agreement to support Syrian Refugee families.

The workers could develop support and engagement activities in the local community and make links with the Youth Service, Syrian Refugee support groups and Syria Sir Gar as appropriate.

## Children's Services support.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers are classed as looked after children and as such require planning and oversight from Children's Services. There will be additional work for existing staff to cover the additional case load. Currently guidance indicates that these costs can be recharged.

### Allocations for the financial year 2015/16 were:

Indirect costs:

Social workers & on costs: £14.00 per day

Admin & finance & on costs: £3.00 per day

Premises costs: £3.00 per day

Other costs: £4.00 per day

Corporate recharges: £2.00 per day

Total indirect: **£26.00 per day**

**A total of £130 per working week.**

£26 per day per UASC for the average of 253 working days in a year = **£6,578.00** per year, per UASC.

### Summary of costs per single UASC

	<u>Per Week</u>	<u>Per Month</u>	<u>Per Year</u>
<b>Host families</b>	<b>£150.00</b>	<b>£675.00</b>	<b>£7,800.00</b>
<b>Llamau</b>	<b>£100.00</b>	<b>£450.00</b>	<b>£5,200.00</b>
<b>Personal Allowance</b>	<b>£57.00</b>	<b>£256.00</b>	<b>£2,964.00</b>
<b>College support</b>	<b>£100.00</b>	<b>£450.00</b>	<b>£5,200.00</b>
<b>EYST support</b>	<b>£100.00</b>	<b>£450.00</b>	<b>£5,200.00</b>
<b>Children's Services</b>	<b>£130.00</b>	<b>£585.00</b>	<b>£6,578.00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£637.00</b>	<b>£2,866.50</b>	<b>£32,942.00</b>

## **Cost reimbursement for post 18 UASC**

### **Young Person's Allowance**

Once a child is 18 they are entitled to claim benefits in their own right and the leaving care allowance of £57 per week ceases.

Once UASC reach 18 they would need to obtain a Biometric Card from the Home Office to verify their immigration status & they would then apply for which ever benefit that would fit their circumstances:

If available for work- Job Seekers Allowance of Universal Credit or Sickness (ESA). If they are 18/19 and still in full time education then they are eligible for Income Support. They would fall under the category of having a Habitual Residence Test (as all people coming to this country from abroad do).

### **Supported lodging costs**

Young people over the age of 18 living in supported lodgings are entitled to claim Housing Benefit (HB). The way Housing Benefit for temporary accommodation is funded will be changing from April 2017. Welsh Government will have funds from DWP to fund the difference between normal HB rates and the cost of supported housing of various kinds. It is likely to be based on the current rate payable for temporary housing for homeless people, which in this case is **£105** a week.

Housing Benefit currently contributes to Supported Lodging providers under **Llamau**. The shortfall in the £150 payment to the Supported Lodging Provider of £45 per week is made up from £20 contributed from the young person's benefits and £25 from the **Supporting People Grant** as they currently are in line with the SLA with Carmarthenshire County Council. Alternatively, should number of post 18 UASC increase significantly, it could be paid from the **Home Office leaving care allocation** for post 18s.

### **Specified accommodation**

Is classed as the following:

- for Universal Credit, Supported Exempt Accommodation is a resettlement place or accommodation provided by a non-metropolitan county council (in England), housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation (the organisation providing the accommodation, or person acting on their behalf, must provide the claimant with care, support or supervision)
- accommodation into which the claimant has been admitted in order to meet a need for care, support or supervision that is provided by one of the following:
  - county council
  - housing association
  - registered charity
  - voluntary organisation
- accommodation for victims of domestic violence where they are managed by:

- local authorities
- county councils
- housing associations
- registered charities
- voluntary organisations
- hostel accommodation provided by local authorities where care, support or supervision is also provided

### **Home Office post 18 Leaving Care Costs**

The Home Office have increased the leaving care fund from £150 a week to £200 per week. The lower limit of the Local Authority bearing the costs of the first 25 care leavers has been scrapped. There is now no lower limit, which is particularly relevant to the Carmarthenshire proposal.

This £200 per week would be sufficient to contribute to the cost of Children's Services staff, help and support with education and training from Children's Services (calculated above as £130 per week) and a contribution to Supported Lodging providers.

### **Wider issues for consideration**

#### **Trafficking and Modern Slavery**

Unaccompanied asylum seeker children are very vulnerable to trafficking and modern slavery. This includes child sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, criminal exploitation and domestic servitude. It is quite possible that children will have experienced exploitation on route to the UK. It is also possible that children may fear debt bondage to their traffickers and be vulnerable to disappearing from care to be further exploited on arrival to the UK. Supported lodgings providers will need to be briefed on trafficking and modern slavery. Children will have the support of social workers with an awareness of trafficking and modern slavery, including how to report cases to the National Referral Mechanism.

#### **Family Reunion**

An unaccompanied asylum seeker child who has resettled in Carmarthenshire may have parents or siblings abroad who used to live together as a family unit. In such cases, an application may be made for Family Reunion. No charge exists for Family Reunion applications. The application will take into account the best interests of the child. It may be that the child is re-united with family members abroad, for example if there are family members as refugees in Germany or Sweden. Another possibility is that family could join the child in Carmarthenshire. There is no additional funding from the Home Office for such circumstances. An enquiry could be made to the Home Office to ascertain how frequently Family Reunion takes place after unaccompanied asylum seeker children have re-settled in the UK.

#### **National Transfer Scheme and Independent Foster Agencies**

Once the NTS starts to function, this may limit the number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children being placed with foster carers by IFAs.

In addition to reducing the need for out of area placements via IFAs, the NTS will also enable responsibility to be transferred to the host authority where this is agreeable and desirable. In theory, this could give a different route to accepting unaccompanied asylum seeker children via the NTS for Carmarthenshire County Council and would also take back management control from IFAs. In practice, IFAs may not be willing for a transfer of responsibility to Carmarthenshire County Council due to their loss of receipt of funding. Further clarification from the Home Office is required in how transfer to a host authority may take place.

### Visas and Leave to Remain

The Home Office determine leave to remain and visas on a case by case basis. There are three scenarios.

1. Limited leave to remain.
2. Refugee Visa, (usually five years)
3. Humanitarian Protection Visa, (usually five years).

Once leave to remain or a visa expires and if the person is then over 18, the Home Office will consider return to their home country if this is assessed as a safe option. Children and young people often adapt to their new surrounding quickly. A repatriation can be profoundly upsetting for a young person and disruptive to further or higher education. There can also be a wider impact on host communities and examples of young people being placed in Detention Centres and returned to countries of origin can attract large petitions and national press.

### **Timescales and action plan**

Aim to commence with the recruitment of 4-6 host families immediately and to have them trained and in place by end of **June 2017**.

- **July and August 2017**- resettlement of 4-6 UASC age 16-18 to 4 host families. Introduce support from EYST and Children’s Services.
- **September 2017**- commence intensive ESOL course at Coleg Sir Gar.
- **Further numbers**-will be driven by the recruitment of host families, with further 16-17 year olds welcomed as and when host families are recruited and trained.
- The aim will be 6- 8 families per year commencing 2018

	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>UASC</b>	<b>4-6</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>6-8</b>
<b>Running total</b>	<b>4-6</b>	<b>10-12</b>	<b>16-18</b>	<b>22-24</b>	<b>28-30</b>

## **Project Proposal Next Steps**

- That approval is sought at the SRTG for this proposal.
- On agreement that approval is sought from DMT and CMT.
- That the SRTG ask for Home Office confirmation that the proposed costs will be covered.
- That on confirmation of funding a target be set of 4 host families to be recruited per year.
- That the Home Office is contacted and updated on how many UASC Carmarthenshire can accommodate only ONCE host families are recruited and trained.
- That progress in this area is reported to the existing Syrian Refugee Task Group.
- That the SRTG consider the proposal that Carmarthenshire participates in the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.
- That the project be jointly managed by Matt Miller and Bethan T James, linking in with Michael Smith.