

# Public Document Pack



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## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TASK AND FINISH GROUP – UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE**

**DATE: THURSDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2011**  
**TIME: 3 PM**  
**PLACE: COUNCIL HOUSE (NEXT TO THE CIVIC CENTRE)**

### **Committee Members–**

Councillor Wildy, Chair  
Councillor Mrs Stephens, Vice Chair  
Councillors Mrs Bowyer, Mrs Nicholson and Tuohy

### **Substitutes–:**

Any Member other than a Member of the Cabinet may act as a substitute member provided that they do not have a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter under review. **However, once a review has commenced, substitutes are not permitted.**

***Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.***

***Members and Officers are requested to sign the attendance list at the meeting.***

Please note that, unless the Chair agrees, mobile phones should be switched off and speech, video and photographic equipment should not be used during meetings.

**BARRY KEEL**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SCRUTINY REVIEWS)**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for non-attendance.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

### **3. UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE:**

3a. Project Initiation Document **(Pages 1 - 2)**

3b. Briefing Document **(Pages 3 - 4)**

3c. Witnesses

### **4. EVIDENCE REVIEW**

Review the evidence from today's meeting.

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members will make recommendations in line with the scope of the review.

### **6. EXEMPT BUSINESS**

To consider passing a resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it (they) involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## **PART II (PRIVATE COMMITTEE)**

### **AGENDA**

#### **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO NOTE**

that under the law, the Panel is entitled to consider certain items in private. Members of the public will be asked to leave the meeting when such items are discussed.

NIL.

## Request for Scrutiny Work Programme Item

|    |                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Title of Work Programme Item</b>                                                                                               | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People in Care                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2  | <b>Responsible Director (s)</b>                                                                                                   | Bronwen Lacey, Director of Services for Children and Young People                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 3  | <b>Responsible Officer</b><br><br><b>Tel No.</b>                                                                                  | Mary Brimson, Head of Service Children and Young People in Care                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 4  | <b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>                                                                                                 | Councillor Mrs Watkins, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 5  | <b>Objectives</b>                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review access to education for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in care.</li> <li>• Review the accommodation for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in care.</li> <li>• Review the process of age assessments undertaken for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in care.</li> </ul> |
| 6  | <b>Who will benefit?</b>                                                                                                          | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People in Care                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 7  | <b>Criteria for Choosing Topics (see table)</b>                                                                                   | Safeguarding issue for looked after children as identified at the Corporate Parenting Group meeting of 20 October 2010.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 8  | <b>What will happen if we don't do this review?</b>                                                                               | The needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in care will not be addressed. Possibility of failing in statutory duty of care.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 9  | <b>What are we going to do?</b>                                                                                                   | Task and finish group to take place over one day.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 10 | <b>How are we going to do it? (witnesses, site visits, background information etc.)</b>                                           | Interviews with key witnesses and background research to include best practice from other authorities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 11 | <b>What we won't do.</b>                                                                                                          | The task and finish group will not look at immigration issues faced by the unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in care.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 12 | <b>Timetable &amp; Key Dates</b>                                                                                                  | To be decided.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 13 | <b>Links to other projects or initiatives / plans</b>                                                                             | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 14 | <b>Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel / Membership if Task and Finish Group (to be decided by OSP before submission to OMB)</b> | Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|           |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>15</b> | <b>Where will the report go? Who will make the final decision</b>                          | Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.                                                                                                         |
| <b>16</b> | <b>Resources (staffing, research, experts, sites visits and so on)</b>                     | Staffing from the Democratic Support Officer, Lead Officer and Head of Service Children and Young People in Care. Policy officers for research. |
| <b>17</b> | <b>Is this part of a statutory responsibility on the panel?</b>                            | Yes                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>19</b> | <b>Should any other panel be involved in this review? If so who and why?</b>               | No                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>20</b> | <b>Will the task and finish group benefit from co-opting any person(s) onto the panel.</b> | Some members of the Corporate Parenting Group will be invited to join the task and finish group.                                                |

## **Briefing Document UASC – Plymouth’s Perspective**

### **What is Asylum?**

Asylum is protection given by a country to someone who is fleeing persecution in their own country. It is given under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. To be recognised as a refugee, you must have left your country and be unable to go back because you have a well-founded fear of persecution.

The UK also adheres to the European Convention on Human Rights, which prevents us sending someone to a country where there is a real risk that they will be exposed to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

An **asylum seeker** is a person who has asked for protection but has not received a decision on their application to become a refugee, or is waiting for the outcome of an appeal. It is normal for a claim for assessment to take up to six months.

An Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC): is an asylum applicant who is less than 18 years old and has no adult relative or guardian to look after them at the time of application.

If an asylum seeker has been granted leave to stay they have **refugee status** and the UK government has offered protection in accordance with the Refugee Convention 1951. Individuals with refugee status are entitled to the same range of services as all other individuals.

### **Adversities faced by UASC**

Typically UASC population face a number of adversities. In addition to the reasons for which they left their country of origin, they usually face a prolonged period of transition to the UK, crossing over many continents and countries. On arrival their ordeal is not over as they have to learn a new language and adjust to different cultural demands. They face uncertainties, sometimes lasting several years, about their asylum status, age and entitlement to services.

### **Plymouth Perspective**

#### **How do UASC arrive at Plymouth?**

UASC can arrive via the ferry port in Plymouth, either legally by requesting asylum on entry or illegally - for example, being smuggled in on Lorries. UASC could also enter England from a different location and travel here or be dispersed here by the border agency.

#### **Age Assessments**

Any Asylum Seeker who is claiming to be less than 18 years of age will have an Age Assessment. This process is led by a Social Worker from Plymouth’s Advice and Assessment Service who is trained to work with UASC. UASC are deemed to be children in need as they are not able to be looked after by their parents. Plymouth City Council has a dedicated policy and procedure for UASC and a procedure on Asylum Seeking Families. These documents ensure that each applicant is treated fairly and in a consistent manner.

## **Numbers & Ethnicity**

There are approximately 500 asylum seekers in Plymouth of those nine are currently UASC most of whom are described as Middle Eastern, African and Arabic. They are all male and their ages are:

- 6 x 17 years
- 2 x 15 years
- 1 x 13 years

There are further 12 UASC (11 male / 1 female) who are now service leavers, aged 18 to 20 who we still have a responsibility for.

## **Support for UASC in Plymouth**

### **16+ Team**

- The 16+ Team provide both practical and emotional support to this group, through enabling them to attend interviews with the UK Border Agency and supporting them by accompanying them to the interviews.
- The majority of UASC, due their age, are found accommodation by the 16+team. As the majority of UASC have lived independently they choose not to be placed in foster care but choose to live in 'training flats'.
- The 16+ Team supply phone cards to UASC as a way of promoting contact with family members living abroad.

### **CAMHS**

- This group often has unresolved emotional and mental health issues, rooted either in the reasons that led them to seek sanctuary in the UK, or as a consequence of the journey that brought them to the UK. Plymouth CAMHS team provides these young people with emotional support and counselling.

### **Language Line**

- Translators in over 110 languages are supplied by Translate Plymouth to assist with the assessment process.