



## Scrutiny Review Terms of Reference Document

<b>Scrutiny Review</b>	Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
<b>Responsible Committee</b>	People Scrutiny Committee
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### 1 Background

1.1 At its meeting on 1 October 2018, the People Scrutiny Committee discussed issues relating to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Members had previously been informed that this is a challenging area for the Children's Services Department and that input from the Committee would be welcomed. As a result of this discussion, it was agreed to appoint an Initial Scoping Board to gather evidence and report back to the Committee.

1.2 The Scoping Board met on 26 October 2018 and discussed evidence presented to them by the Children's Services Department. Written background material was also circulated to the Board. This included the following items:

- 'Seeking Support: A guide to the rights and entitlements of separated children' - a guidance document produced by the Coram Children's Legal Centre
- An ESCC briefing note on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Update 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 – Corporate Parenting Panel report

1.3 The main issues discussed by the Scoping Board were:

- **Placement Capacity.** The Board heard that the numbers of experienced providers of supported housing, supported lodgings and foster placements for UASC within the local system is not sufficient to meet demand. As a result, the Council currently place a significant number of UASC in either 'out of county' provision or in other expensive in-county provision. There is also a particular concern regarding the potential impact of a discovery of a large group of UASC (spontaneous arrival). In this context, the Department explained to Members that there is a gap between the grant allocation from Government per young person and the funding that is required to support each UASC. Consequently, a sudden increase in UASC numbers would have significant financial implications for the authority and its ability to support these vulnerable children and young people. Members will probably be aware of the recent incident regarding the discovery of 11 UASC at the port of Newhaven. Such incidents demonstrate the unpredictable nature of the pressures UASC can place on the Department and the need for increased capacity.
- **Diversity of capacity.** There is also a need to increase the diversity of providers of UASC placements in East Sussex. Having placement options that provide a greater mix of people from differing ethnic, social-economic and

cultural-religious backgrounds could help UASC with the process of adjusting to a new country. There is also the potential that such placements may decrease the chances of a UASC absconding (see the next bullet point below).

Furthermore, there is a geographic element to this issue, as the majority of providers are in the urban coastal strip. The availability of provision in other parts of the county could help increase the chances of placements being offered that better fit the needs of individual UASC.

- **UASC who abscond.** Despite the Council's best efforts, UASC sometimes abscond after being placed in a temporary placement on arrival. As a corporate parent, the Council are concerned about these incidents since these children and young people are Looked After. There is interest therefore in further developing the Department's current strategy regarding how such occurrences might be reduced.
- **Work Experience and other related opportunities.** The Board also heard that UASC have equivalent status to other Looked After Children. As a result the Council, as it would for any other Looked After Child, is seeking to develop the opportunities it can offer for UASC to have access to careers advice and work experience opportunities.

## 2 Scope of the Review

2.1 Through the initial scoping exercise, the Board considered the following themes:

- The existing resource limitations for working with UASC and the consequent impacts this has.
- How Members could have a role in providing advice and help to prepare their communities to receive and support UASCs.
- How Members could help explore and develop capacity in the Voluntary Sector to build support for UASCs.

2.2 On the basis of the initial scoping work, the Board concluded there would be benefit in undertaking a formal Scrutiny Review of issues relating to supporting UASC. As a result, the Board agreed it would recommend to the People Scrutiny Committee that a Scrutiny Review Board is established.

2.3 Members recommend that the Scrutiny Review should explore the following **key lines of enquiry**:

- How can the Department develop its strategies regarding:
  - both increasing and diversifying the capacity and range of its providers of accommodation for UASC; and
  - delivering work experience and other related opportunities for UASC?

2.4 The Scoping Board also considered the role of the local Member. Members have a well-developed knowledge of their local communities and will have a network of contacts which include local businesses, organisations and community groups. The Board therefore recommend exploring a further line of enquiry:

- What is the potential for Members to help with raising awareness and support for UASC in their local communities, including generating more enquiries from a wider range of people interested in becoming a provider of:

- accommodation for UASC; or
- work placement opportunities?

2.5 This will include consideration of the type of tools and advice Members might need to assist in this way.

### **3 Review methods**

3.1 It is anticipated that the Review Board will review documentary evidence, question witnesses and undertake research in order to gather evidence to inform its recommendations.

### **4. Review Organisation and Responsibilities**

#### **4.1 Initial Scoping Board**

The initial scoping for this review was undertaken by Councillors Field, Webb and Whetstone.

#### **4.2 Review Board**

The Review Board is: *to be confirmed by the People Scrutiny Committee*

The Chair of the Review Board is: *to be confirmed by the People Scrutiny Committee*

#### **4.3 The Review Board is responsible for:**

- making decisions regarding the scope and direction of the review;
- monitoring and control of the overall progress of the review;
- agreeing where Board members will undertake evidence gathering activities as required by the review;
- considering and providing challenge to all evidence presented to it; and
- developing and agreeing the final report, including the findings and recommendations of the review.

### **5 Scrutiny Review Support**

#### **5.1 Support for the review will be provided by the Member Services Team to:**

- manage the review process;
- undertake research as agreed by the Board;
- draft the final report.

5.2 The Lead Officer who will support the review from the Member Services Team is Stuart McKeown, Senior Democratic Services Adviser. Their role is to manage the review, ensuring its aims and objectives are met and that the final report is delivered to the People Scrutiny Committee within the agreed timescales.

### **6 Scrutiny Review Completion**

6.1 When the review has been completed the Lead Officer will co-ordinate the production of a final report outlining the findings and recommendations for agreement by the Review Board. Once agreed, the Review Board will present this to the People Scrutiny Committee for it to agree the recommendations.

6.2 The report will then be presented to Cabinet for comment and County Council for approval. Progress updates on how the recommendations are being implemented by the Department will be presented to the People Scrutiny Committee in due course (usually six and twelve months after the review has been approved by County Council).

## 7 Review Timetable

7.1 Based on the initial scoping of the Review, the Review Board aims to submit the final report to the People Scrutiny Committee at the meeting to be held on 7 March 2019.

7.2 An initial timetable of the meetings and activities required to complete the review is outlined below. *[The number of review board meetings is not fixed and there can be more or less depending on the nature of the review. The Review Board will agree the number and content of the meetings and review activity].*

Activity	Timescale/Date
<u>Review Board Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider initial evidence</li> <li>• Review lines of enquiry/terms of reference</li> <li>• Agree further evidence gathering/requirements</li> </ul>	December 2018
<u>Review Board Activity/Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence gathering</li> </ul>	January 2019
Draft Scrutiny Review report and finalise findings and recommendations of the review.	January/February 2019
<b><u>Final Review Board Meeting to agree Report</u></b> Review Board meeting to agree draft report, findings and recommendations with input from key officers.	February 2019
Deadline for Report Dispatch	27 February 2019
<b><u>Report to People Scrutiny Committee for agreement</u></b>	7 March 2019
<b>Report to Cabinet</b>	23 April 2019
<b>Report to Council</b>	14 May 2019