**Appendix 2.3A**

**Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Dispersal, Housing and Local Connection Briefing – 12th February 2017v4**

**Strategic Partnership Accommodation Board and Heads of Housing Group**

**Purpose of Paper**

* To provide information about the UASC dispersal system that the Home Office and Department for Education have introduced
* To provide information about housing entitlement and ‘local connection’ for UASC who present in a) Hertfordshire, b) are dispersed to Hertfordshire
* To set out proposals for the development of a Hertfordshire USAC dispersal system in regard to housing entitlements/local connection for those who present in Hertfordshire and for those who are dispersed to Hertfordshire

**Background/Context**

A ‘local connection’ for UASC who present in Hertfordshire has traditionally been established on the basis of which police station the child is initially taken to (this also being the nationally established approach). The majority of UASC in Hertfordshire are deemed to have a ‘local connection’ with Watford and Welwyn/Hatfield. The practice of taking UASC to the nearest police station is in the process of changing within Hertfordshire, as such all UASC will be taking to Hatfield police station.

Table 1 UASC Numbers who are Looked After by Hertfordshire

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Age | Number | Able to Register for HousingYes No |
| 15 | 8 | 1 | 7 |
| 16 | 48 | 16 | 32 |
| 17 | 17 | 1 | 16 |
| 18 | 33 | 22 | 11 |

UASC become eligible to register for housing (public services) once they have an initial asylum decision of ‘refugee status’, ‘indefinite leave to remain’ or ‘limited leave to remain’. UASC are not eligible to register for housing until the outcome of their initial application and where they are given an outright asylum refusal. The majority of children who apply for asylum are refused; but given limited leave to remain on humanitarian protection grounds (HP) as they are children. The limited leave status is usually granted until the age of 17½ or 18. As long as a UASC applies to extend their leave to remain, or appeals an adverse decision prior to their status expiring, the status remains the same whilst the extension request/appeal is being processed.

The Home Office and the Department for Education have developed and are implementing a UASC dispersal system to take pressure off Kent and other local authorities who have a high percentage of looked after UASC. Once fully established, the system will ensure that each local authority is allocated and support UASC (who are looked after) up to a figure of 0.07 percent of their overall child population (the 0.07 percent figure will include UASC who present in that local authority). In Hertfordshire 0.07 percent of the overall child population would equate to approximately (180 children aged 0 to 18).

To ascertain which housing authority is responsible for dispersed UASC and their ‘local connection’, clarification has been sought from the Home Office, the Department for Education and the Children’s Services regional groupings. The response indicates that the local authority receiving the dispersed UASC takes on the ‘local connection’, whilst this is relatively straight forward for unitary authorities it is more complex issue for two tier authorities.

**Homelessness Reduction Bill**

Section 8 of the Homelessness Reduction Bill proposes a number of changes in regard to care leavers and local connection.

1. A care leaver will have a local connection with any housing authority in the Children’s Service area if a two tier council.
2. A care leaver will have a local connection with any local housing authority where they have been placed by Children’s Services and are normally resident for a continuous period of two years, some or all of which falls before the young person attains the age of 16.

**Proposed ‘Local Connection’ System**

1. To ensure the housing dispersal system is deemed fair in Hertfordshire, it is proposed to set up a rota to allocate a housing authority ‘local connection’ to each UASC (at the point they receive a decision that entitles them to register for housing/public services). The allocation would be based on a 1 to 10 system and by housing authority area in alphabetical order.
2. Consideration should also be given to extending the proposed dispersal rota system to UASC who initially present in Hertfordshire given that UASC will all be taken to Hatfield police station.