



REPORT TITLE: UK Resettlement Scheme funding for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Dates between which decision will be taken	Earliest date: 4 th April 2024 Latest date: 30 th April 2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Stephan Fifield, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery
Key Decision	No
Purpose of Report	To seek approval to utilise UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) grant funding received by the County Council from the Home Office to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
Recommendations	That Cabinet approves the allocation of £1.5 million from the UKRS grant to the children's social services team for the purpose of supporting and accommodating unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) arriving in Gloucestershire during 2023/24.
Reasons for Recommendations	<p>The above recommendation will secure the continuation of support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Gloucestershire, ensuring that funding is available for covering the costs of providing this support.</p> <p>The recommendation aims to reduce the risk posed to unaccompanied children, who are highly vulnerable due to the circumstances they have faced and the situation they find themselves in when arriving in this country. Local authorities have a duty to protect and support these children and ensure that their needs are addressed as soon as they are referred or found in the LA area, to safeguard and promote their welfare by providing services appropriate to those needs.</p> <p>The number of UASC arriving in county has been many more than expected, with 36 new under-18 cases in Gloucestershire since April 2023. There are currently (as at 1st March 2024) 64 under-18s and 81 over-18s registered as UASCs in the county.</p> <p>Funding for UASC under-18s is funded at £41,724 or £52,338 per individual per year (depending on the route of referral). Placement costs for supporting UASC continue to rise, with an average cost for the majority of cases being £65,000 annually. The differential is even higher for over-18s where the funding received is much lower. So we are seeing consistent overspend of £13,000 or £24,000 per case for those placed in agency fostering which accounts for more than 90% of all placements.</p>

	<p>All outcomes for the delivery of the UKRS are met consistently with 383 refugees settled through the scheme to date. The funding is ring-fenced for year one to ensure resettlement of arriving refugees in county. However the funding continues in years 2 to 5 and allows for more targeted or locally prioritised spend. The conditions and obligations of the UKRS grant are being met.</p> <p>Many of the UASC group go on to receive settled status and become refugees. It is therefore proposed that £1.5 million should be used to support the UASC cohort in year thus ensuring support for this vulnerable group of migrant children.</p>
Resource Implications	<p>It is proposed that funding of £1.5 million is used to support the UASC. These funds would be taken from the £3.1 million currently in the UKRS reserve held by GCC.</p> <p>The UKRS programme receives £20,520 per person tariff over five years allocated from the Overseas Development Aid budget to local authorities. The first £8,520 per individual is ring-fenced for year 1 and is fully utilised to ensure individuals and families are welcomed, settled and supported following their arrival in the UK. The year 2-5 funding is also calculated on a per person tariff and paid to GCC.</p> <p>Funding per person is broken down as follows: Year 1 tariff - £8,520 Year 2 tariff - £5,000 Year 3 tariff - £3,700 Year 4 tariff - £2,300 Year 5 tariff - £1,000</p> <p>Funds are claimed from the Home Office on a bimonthly basis.</p>
Background Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Officer Decision (24/03/2021): To Award a Contract for Refugee Support for the grant funded Home Office Resettlement Scheme</u> • <u>Individual Cabinet Member Decision report October 2020 and associated documents</u> • <u>UK Resettlement Scheme Funding Instruction 22 -23</u>
Statutory Authority	Section 1 (1) Localism Act 2011 – general power of competence
Divisional Councillor(s)	Countywide
Officer	<p>Any representations should be sent to: Name: Ruth Woolley Tel. no: 01452 426150</p>

	Email: ruth.woolley@gloucestershire.gov.uk By 5pm on 12 April 2024
Timeline	The approval of the recommendation to fund support for UASC is a priority in order to ensure that the council has sufficient funding to fulfil its duty to provide care and placements for UASC.

Background

1. A UASC is defined as an individual, who is under 18 years of age when an asylum application is submitted, is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, and has applied for asylum in the United Kingdom in their own right.
2. Children seeking asylum who are not travelling with a responsible adult, are separated or 'unaccompanied' are therefore 'in need'. The local authority children's social services team has a duty to assess such children, safeguard and promote their welfare, under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. They will then almost always need to be accommodated them under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
3. A child who is accommodated by children's services under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 for 24 hours falls within the definition of a 'looked after' child.
4. Unaccompanied children are alone, in an unfamiliar country and may be surrounded by people unable to speak their first language. They are likely to be uncertain or unaware of their rights and whom they should trust, and are at increased risk of going missing, often leaving the care of those who would protect them to return to traffickers who will continue their exploitation. Groups may have experienced emotional trauma in their country of birth, on their journey to the UK or through their treatment by adults in the UK.
5. The number of UASC arriving in the county shifts a little throughout the year as new cases arrive and others move into the post-18 category. Over the last year there have been 36 new under-18 cases (since April 2023) and over the same period 27 cases have moved into the post-18 category. As at 1st March 2024, there were 64 UASC under-18s and 81 USAC over-18s in Gloucestershire.
6. For UASC under-18s, the funding received on a daily rate is currently £114. However if a case is accepted via the national transfer scheme (NTS), there is an additional £29 per day, making it £143 per day. Just under half of our current under-18s are NTS cases. A full year is therefore funded with a grant of either £41,724 or £52,338 per case.
7. Placement costs differ for in-house fostering and agency fostering. Less than 10% of UASC cases are in in-house fostering. In-house fostering typically costs in the region of £15,000 annually, so for this small number of cases there is a slight excess in funding. Agency fostering is used for over 90% of under-18 UASC and has an average cost of £65,000 annually, leaving a discrepancy in the region of £24,000 per annum per case, or £13,000 per case if NTS. There are also additional direct costs incurred of around £200k for translation services, phones and transport for UASC.
8. For over-18 UASC the situation is worse as GCC receive just £270 per week, (£14,117 per annum). Many of these clients are still in agency fostering, so the shortfall per case averages at £30,000 per annum plus direct costs.
9. GCC therefore consistently overspends on UASC support as costs continue to rise, particularly in agency fostering; numbers of UASC increase and more agency fostering placements are needed.

10. To date 383 adults and children have resettled in Gloucestershire through the UK Resettlement Scheme UKRS (which combines the original Syrian Vulnerable Person Scheme SVPS and other national programmes to form the UKRS).
11. The resettlement support that is provided to refugees is responsive to individual needs and covers the following areas:
- Accommodation - decorating and preparing properties as they become available in line with Home Office requirements
 - Immigration status and related issues, including Biometric Residence Permits and residency
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Financial stability, including accessing relevant benefits.
 - Childcare and education, including ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for adults
 - Skills training and employment
 - Cultural and community integration
12. All outcomes for the delivery of the UKRS are met consistently. The conditions and obligations of the UKRS grant are being met. The funding is ring-fenced for year one to ensure resettlement of arriving refugees in county. However the funding continues in years 2 to 5 and allows for more targeted or locally prioritised spend.
13. Many of the UASC group go on to receive settled status and become refugees. It is therefore proposed that £1.5 million from the £3.1 million UKRS reserves should be used to support the UASC cohort in year thus ensuring support for this vulnerable group of migrant children.

Options

Option 1: To approve the recommendation of this report, to allocate £1.5 million of the UKRS reserves to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

14. The proposal to allocate £1.5 million from the reserves of the UKRS funding is recommended so that the necessary level of support and appropriate placements can be provided to the vulnerable group of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Many of this cohort will go onto receive settled status in county and look to settle within Gloucestershire. To give them the best chances in their new life it is recommended that their support is funded at a level that meets the increasing needs and rising costs.

Option 2: Not to allocate unused refugee funds to support UASC as set out in this report

15. This option is not recommended. Not allocating this additional funding risks the Council being unable to adequately fund support in order to fulfil its duty to ensure care, support and appropriate placements to UASC arriving in the county. Without receipt of additional funds, the children's services overspend in 2023/24 is likely to increase by £1.5 million.

Risks

16. If sufficient funding had not been made available for the teams supporting UASC, there may have been children put at increased risk when they arrived in county looking for support, safeguarding and protection. UASC are one group of the refugee and asylum-seeking population who arrive in Gloucestershire looking for a new home. There is a risk that inequity in provision between the various schemes and cohorts exists. However, this situation is monitored through the governance structures established to support the migration work across the county through the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership (GSMP). A review of all

the schemes, their funding and governance has begun and will enable a better understanding of the whole system. This will also allow for effective review and planning for the mitigation of risks.

17. Failure to allocate funding for UASC could have presented a reputational risk, and diminished our reputation as a Council that does everything reasonably possible to support asylum seekers. Furthermore, if it is perceived that the Children's Services budget was being affected due to asylum seekers this may have had in turn negative reputational and community impacts.

Financial implications

18. The cost of providing this additional £1.5 million financial support for UASC is to be funded from the £3.1 million UKRS reserves. This funding is un ring-fenced after the first year and is intended to fund services for refugees seeking resettlement in the UK. The reserves more than cover the cost of this allocation with over £1.6 million remaining in the UKRS reserves after this allocation.

Climate change implications

Has the Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) been completed? No

Ecological implications

Has an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) been produced, or will one be undertaken at a later stage? No

Equality implications

19. An Equalities Impact has been completed for this proposal. Cabinet Members should read and consider the Equalities Impact Assessment to satisfy themselves as decision makers that due regard has been given.

The principal equality issues are set out below:

- The allocation of financial support for UASC has benefited this specific group of children, bringing them in line with other new arrivals on refugee schemes and children arriving as asylum seekers with parents or family.
- Appropriate consideration will be given to the needs of asylum seekers arriving who are from protected characteristic groups and any additional support required will be delivered by the Children's Services team and through existing contracts with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS).
- Support is given to other migrants and refugees coming into the county through separate funding streams coordinated through the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

20. A DPIA Screening Checklist has been completed and, as the allocation of the funding does not involve the processing of personal data, there is no requirement for a DPIA.

Social value implications

21. Supporting refugees and asylum seekers provides an opportunity for the community, local businesses, and anchor institutions to work together to help people that have experienced trauma. In time, refugees and asylum seekers supported by the local community may become an important part of the local community themselves. Supporting refugees and asylum seekers

reduces the risk of further disruption to their lives and increases their ability to make a positive contribution to their local community.

Consultation feedback

22. The recommendation set out in this report has been shared with and supported by colleagues working with the UKRS and UASC cohorts.

Officer recommendations

23. It is recommended that Cabinet should approve the recommendation of this report as summarised in Option 1 above.

Performance management/follow-up

24. Information about UASC support is collected and routinely recorded. The delivery and performance of the UKRS is monitored and measured against clear indicators and data returns. Administration of the scheme may be audited in the future.