



Agenda Item 6

**Support for Children Seeking Asylum
or Fleeing War in Ukraine**

Falkirk Council

Title: Support for Children Seeking Asylum or Fleeing War in Ukraine
Meeting: Education, Children and Young People Executive
Date: 21 March 2023
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Education, Children and Young People Executive on children who are seeking asylum through the National Transfer Scheme and children the Council is supporting who are seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine.
- 1.2 The report outlines the resource implications associated with fulfilling our statutory duties to these children and proposals to address them.
- 1.3 The proposal outlined in this report will assist the service to meet the Council Plan priority 'Promoting opportunities and reducing inequalities'.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Education, Children and Young People's Executive is asked to:

- (1) note the content of this report;
- (2) agree that under the circumstances that the Director of Children's Services can under delegated authority be allowed to both flexibly use existing resources and recruit additional resources within the areas outlined in Sections 7.5 and 7.7 in support of our statutory responsibilities to these children and young people; and
- (3) request that a report providing further details on how Falkirk are supporting these children and young people later in 2023.

3 Climate Change

- 3.1 Having consulted the energy and climate change team, outcomes of this report will have no effect on either the organisational or national climate change targets.

4 Background Position

National Transfer Scheme

- 4.1 The National Transfer Scheme has been mandated since 14th December 2021 under Section 72(3) of the Immigration Act 2016 (the 2016 Act) to provide placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are in need of care and protection.
- 4.2 Currently, Scotland is required to take 45 young people per 650 unaccompanied children needing to be cared for through the National Transfer Scheme. As a consequence of pressures Scotland's allocation of young people is to increase and outlined at Section 6.1.
- 4.3 Falkirk Council currently cares for 12 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. The youngsters are cared for in a variety of care settings: residential, foster care and supported accommodation.
- 4.4 On 24th August 2022, the Minister for Safe and Legal Immigration announced that the 10-day transfer timescale from a child being allocated to a local authority to allowing for suitable accommodation being arranged, would be reduced to 5 working days.
- 4.5 Local authorities have been encouraged through different initiatives to take children within the timescale set and where possible in addition to their rota allocation. This is to ensure that young people are not accommodated in hotels without the appropriate level of care and support they require.

Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme

- 4.6 The Home Office announced on 22 June 2022 that a safe route will be opened to allow unaccompanied children to travel to Scotland to seek refuge from the war in Ukraine via a sponsor scheme. The scheme was relaxed with the announcement of a new safe route that allowed visas to be granted to children to travel to the United Kingdom without the need for an accompanying adult.
- 4.7 In Falkirk there are currently 66 Ukrainian children enrolled across our schools estate.
- 4.8 The numbers remain fluid with some children moving outwith the Falkirk areas at the same time as others moving to Falkirk.

5 Considerations

National Transfer Scheme

- 5.1 Children accommodated under the National Transfer Scheme have "looked after status" and the local authority has the same statutory and

responsibilities to these children as for any other looked after child.

- 5.2 The local authority is required to identify a worker to take the Lead Professional role for each child and, to date, this has been registered Social Workers.

Key responsibilities are:

- To identify a suitable placement that meets the needs of the young person
- Meeting the child within 72 hours of arrival, preferably within 24 hours to ensure their immediate needs are being met
- Supporting the young person to settle into their new life in Scotland and ensure that their cultural and religious needs are met
- Arranging an initial health assessment
- Referral to the Scottish Guardianship Service and providing ongoing support through the asylum-seeking process
- Arranging enrolment in education
- Arranging for interpretation/translation services
- Visiting the child on a regular basis
- Arranging and attending multi- agency Looked After Reviews, providing an assessment in advance
- Leading on the progressing of the Child's Plan

Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme

- 5.3 Ukrainian children enrolled in Falkirk schools require additional educational support where English is not their first language.
- 5.4 Determining the needs of individual children takes time to develop a bespoke educational support plan. This is done in the absence of additional resources to support educational establishments to fulfil their responsibilities.

6 Implications

National Transfer Scheme

- 6.1 The table below shows the number of young people accommodated by Scottish Local Authorities, over the past few years. This supports the Home Office projection that the number of young people arriving by boat will be higher in 2023 than in 2022. Therefore, the Scottish rota model has been removed and Scotland will be allocated 63 young people per 650 arrivals instead of the current 45 young people.

CALENDAR YEAR	NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE
2018	9
2019	11
2020	19
2021	52
2022	217

- 6.2 In light of the ongoing pressures, the Home Office has indicated that they consider there is need to establish up a regional intake unit in all of the devolved Nations based on the Kent Intake Unit model. To consider the implications for a Scottish intake unit, CoSLA have set up a Short Life Working Group that includes: the Scottish Government; Social Work Scotland; Chief Social Work Officer and the Care Inspectorate.
- 6.3 CoSLA believe the establishment of a regional intake unit in Scotland will shift, rather than solve the issue. The real issue being the lack of suitable placements for young people across all placement types across Scotland. The challenges in securing placements for children were reported to Executive on 13th September 2022, the situation has not improved.
- 6.4 Providing dedicated support to young people accommodated through the National Transfer Scheme are set against a backdrop of significant and sustained staffing pressures in Children's Social Work Services.

Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme

- 6.5 The same challenges apply when considering the need to support children from Ukraine who are living in Falkirk.
- 6.6 The level of support that will be required by the children currently enrolled in Falkirk schools who are in the care of their parents is difficult to predict.
- 6.7 Any child that is unaccompanied, Social Work will be required to undertake the equivalent of a Private Fostering assessment and the production of a Child's Plan.

7 Implications

Financial

National Transfer Scheme – Est Additional Income & Expenditure

- 7.1 The current cohort of 12 young people in Falkirk are accommodated in a range of foster care, supported care and residential care.
- 7.2 The estimated costs associated with these 12 placements for 2023/24 is:

- Est care expenditure £ 769,000
- Est grant income £ 416,000
- **Net Cost £ 353,000**

For 2022/23 a net cost of £28,000 was reported to Executive in February 2023.

- 7.3 For the next incoming cohort of 12 children, grant income is estimated to be £302,000 based on 1 child being received each month during 2023/24. This figure is an estimation; the cost could change significantly as it depends upon the placement type and the age of the young person. The situation is volatile with changes to the National Transfer Scheme currently underway. The next update report will provide more up to date estimates of income and expenditure.

Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme – Est Additional Income & Expenditure

- 7.4 The Home Office has agreed to provide additional funding to local authorities to provide education services for children from families arriving from Ukraine under the 3 agreed schemes:
- Super sponsor – agreed via a national hub
 - Local sponsor – via visa scheme
 - Family Contacts
- 7.5 Based on the 66 pupils in Falkirk schools, we are due to receive, subject to audit checks, c.**£325,000**. As schools are currently assessing individual pupils additional needs it is too early to estimate what the overall additional costs will be. Section 7.7 below however highlights the areas where some additional staff resources may need to be deployed on a temporary basis.
- 7.6 Falkirk have submitted returns for Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 for 2022/23. The UK Government have recently advised that they have passed funding directly to the Scottish Government, who will distribute these monies via a direct grant to local authorities.

Proposal to Use Additional Funding

- 7.7 To provide the appropriate levels of support for children from the National Transfer Scheme and Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme, Children's Services propose to utilise the additional funding to increase resources on a temporary basis within the following areas:
- Teachers
 - Support for Learning Assistants
 - Social Work Assistants
 - Community Education Workers
 - Central Support Co-ordinator
- 7.8 Within a Social Work context, the implications associated with having a

dedicated lead professional are detailed in Section 5 above. Given the current pressures in the system and lack of capacity to adhere to our statutory responsibilities, it is recommended we utilise a proportion of Home Office funding to recruit 2 Social Work Assistants (SWAs). It is proposed that each of these temporary SWAs is aligned across the three locality teams and act as the conduit, co-ordinating support provision to enable integration in local schools and communities. The costs of the posts (£43,500 per post, per annum), would be met through the expected funding from the Home Office outlined in Section 7.5 of this report. The total cost of this is **c.£87,000**.

- 7.9 The posts will be temporary for the duration of two years to allow Falkirk Council to meet the support needs of both children from the National Transfer Scheme and children seeking refuge from the Ukrainian war. The additional staff resources will ensure that Falkirk Council meets its statutory duties and responsibilities.
- 7.10 To meet the needs of these children within schools it is important that both current staffing resources can be flexibly utilised, and that Children's Services can, if approved by the Director of Children's Services recruit additional staff within the areas outlined in Section 7.1 above on a temporary basis. All such decisions would be made within the parameters of the additional funding that will be received.

Legal

- 7.11 The council has a legal statutory responsibility to children who are looked after and accommodated. In addition, the council has responsibilities in accordance to the Home Office's National Transfer Scheme and children for whom it has a corporate parenting responsibility.

Risk

- 7.12 The council has both a legal and moral responsibility to safeguard children seeking asylum and fleeing war. Failure to do so, will have lifelong implications for the wellbeing of those young people and considerable reputational damage to the council.

Equalities

- 7.13 There is no requirement to undertake an EPIA in relation to the contents of this report.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This report outlines the challenges to provide support to children accommodated through the National Transfer Scheme and Ukrainian Resettlement Schemes, within existing resources.
- 8.2 It is important that the Director of Children's Services has the delegated

authority to flexibly alter existing resources and bring in additional resources on a temporary basis within the overall funding levels being received to ensure that our legal obligations in caring and providing education provision for these children can be met thus ensuring these children and young people are provided with safe care and their rights are upheld.

Director of Children's Services

Author – Sharon Laing, sharon.laing@falkirk.gov.uk

Appendices

None

List of Background Papers:

None