

Draft Agenda for the Joint Councils' Meeting

Date and time: 1.30- 4pm 14th October 2008

**Venue: The Cabinet Room, Sessions House, Maidstone
ME141XQ**

Chair: Councillor Paul Carter, Kent County Council

Number	Agenda item	
1	Welcome and introductions	Paul Carter
2	Minutes and matters arising	All
3	Update on current financial position and offers received by UKBA	All
4	Discussion on participation in UASC Reform	All
5	Next Steps	All
6	AOB	All

Draft

Action notes from Joint Council's meeting held in Oxford

20th February 2008:

Present: Graeme Trott - Hammersmith and Fulham
Andy Ferguson – Hammersmith and Fulham
Alen Renshall – Liverpool County Council
Susan Ellery – West Sussex
Mary Blanche – Kent County Council
Carey Baff – Birmingham County Council
Ken Meeson – Solihull
Anne Plummer – Solihull
Peter Gilroy – Kent County Council
Paul Carter – Kent County Council
Colin Elliot – Manchester City Council
Natalie Yost – Kent County Council
Chris Speves (??) – Hillingdon
Cllr David Simmonds – Hillingdon
Cllr Paul Lynch – Hounslow
David Robertson – Oxfordshire County Council
Andy Couldrick – Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Louise Chapman – Oxfordshire County Council
Janet Tomlinson – Oxfordshire County Council
Fran Fonseca – Oxfordshire County Council

Notes of meeting

It was decided by those present at the meeting that the formal agenda would be dispensed with as the major topic of interest to the group was the recent offer of partial settlement by the Home Office. Paul Carter and Peter Gilroy outlined the offered settlement which had been suggested to them in the previous week. The offer from the Home Office was to pay 70% of the deficit money owed to all the members of the joint council but there was no corresponding offer in relation to the deficit in the DCSF grant. If all the authorities had been happy with this suggestion, the Home Office would have written to all authorities outlining a formal offer.

Action: It was agreed not to take this informal offer further. Kent to lead on drafting letter refusing the informal offer. This will be circulated.

Several courses of action were debated. These included looking again at the possibility of judicial remedy, looking at involving MPs in a Ministerial meeting, all authorities to take the opportunity to publicise their position with Members and others who may be able to influence the situation. It was noted that this is an issue which has implications for social cohesion.

Minutes of the ADCS/ADASS Asylum Seekers Taskforce held on 9th April 2008**Venue: Local Government House, London****Time: 11.00AM****Present:**

Pauline Newman (Chair) – Manchester City Council	PN
Barbara Donovan – Manchester City Council	BD
Emma Jenkins – LGA	EJ
Sharon Davies – Newport Council	SD
Peter Olnier – Birmingham	PO
Debbie Haith - Hillington	DH
Cecilia Hitchen – Haringey Council	CH
Bob Spencer – Hounslow Council	BS
Karen Goodman – Kent	KG
Mary Blanche – Kent County Council	MB
Richard Ross – Solihull Council	RR
Carey Baff – Birmingham City Council	CB
Olivia Fellas – London Borough of Islington	OF
Joe Heatley – UKBA	JH
John Donaldson – Glasgow Council (COSLA)	JD
Steve Liddicott – Croydon Council	SL
Grace Ashaye – NRUC	GA
Helen Johnston – London Councils	HJ
Lorraine Copeland (minutes) – Manchester City Council	LC

Apologies:

Anne James – Leeds City Council
 Steve Martin – Solihull
 Deborah Ramsdale – Staffordshire County Council
 Anne Plummer – Solihull MBC

Item No **Action**

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Minutes and matters arising from last meeting

Addition of apology from Karen Goodman and note change of Faye Hardy to Anne Plummer.

There is no confirmed replacement as yet for Peter Hay. PN confirmed that if nothing emerges soon that she would write to the president of the ADASS to prompt **PN** action.

LGA Updates

NASAF – BD has emailed but heard nothing to date. EJ confirmed that she would ensure that membership was discussed at the next meeting in June. **EJ**

Guardianship - JH

DCSF are minded to resist the call for this new role and are considering strengthening the role of the Independent review officer and use Independent visitors more often.

Trafficking

SL talked about a focused piece of work carried out in London and the South East, tracking unaccompanied minors. The results showed that the scale of the problem may not be as big as initially anticipated, although almost all the minors were from China. He confirmed that the study covered 90% of the South East and looked at all ASU's and airports. KG felt it disappointing that this hadn't covered Kent as this would probably have affected the statistics.

SL said that out of 700, around 600 applicants had LA support and of the remaining 100, 40 were missing or had lost contact after 3 months.

JH said that UKBA were looking at our guidance on private fostering and other forms of sponsorship. He said that although the report wouldn't be conclusive it was likely to be in the public arena by Summer/Autumn, it is backed by the DCSF and the profiling had been backed up by intelligence.

3. UASC Reform - All

JH left the room so a more open discussion could take place.

PN has written to DCSs

PN had agreed with BK that he could have an input into the next letter she sends out, as this will ensure DCSs have all the information they need to make informed decisions.

PN said that at last weeks meetings with UKBA (PN and BD met firstly with Brian Kinney and then with Matthew Coats and Justin Russell)

PN contrasted this to other processes where different LA's have clashed with the government on other issues and concluded that we need to have thoughts for what is put in place if resolution of the issues does not happen. The group needs to be satisfied that we have looked at every possible solution.

- A Partial Solution
- Different agreements to suit some LA's/Partnerships
- Pilot scheme to explore difficulties

PN asked if there was merit in having a working group from the Taskforce/LGA or a multi-layer partnership to look for a way forward? She suggested a negotiating team from each side

KG talked about Kent's last meeting with the reform programme and stated that there was an issue with trust because of funding for past expenditure gateway model.

SL felt that only if both parties – UKBA and DCSF were sitting there at the same time would they have the whole picture. He also thought there would be no confidence in commissioning projects as the UKBA have withdrawn funding in the past.

EJ made a few points:

- Fundamentally all had agreed the need for reform
- Only going to work with a sector-led programme
- A working group was a good idea.

The group agreed to this Working Group approach.

PN said that if, as was generally agreed, we would have a working group we may need a professional facilitator

It was agreed that there would be four representatives and BD.

EJ asked about representation from the association in addition to the above and PN agreed.

It was also agreed that a facilitator would be needed and this would need UK BA's representatives

PN

SD said that Wales were taking their mandate from the Taskforce.

JD felt there was a need for a separate dialogue due to the Scottish legislation around 'leaving care'.

JH re-joined the meeting.

PN told JH broadly what the intention was and JH said that he would feedback that the group were working on a working group approach.

JH

4. Joint Councils update – Mary Blanche

Following the report.

Have been offered settlement of 70% of the shortfall of the Home Office grants but this has been turned down by joint councils.

The meeting with the minister didn't go ahead but representatives of the joint council are in talks.

There is an event to be held at the House of Lords on 23 April to which Peers, MP's, Ministers, LGA, DCSF.

MB said PN & PH have been invited but PN said she had not received an invitation MB will look into this

MB

5. Feedback from Age Assessment working group – Richard Ross

There is a wide membership under director of Asylum policy. The process and terms of reference has been outlined.

ADCS has two reps. Croydon, Kent, and Scotland also represented

1st meeting 25th February– Discussed analysis of numbers.

2nd meeting 31st March– Discussed foundations of AA centres and what their limitations were. A linear approach is being taken but this is not necessarily successful.

PN asked has it crossed over into questioning the quality of key workers?

JD confirmed that they are looking at this like a simple transaction eg the quickest way and not the best way.

SL felt that it wasn't as bad as that and the representation has been quite good. The LA was the context in his presentation. He sensed that the representatives from Medical Associations were moving further away from the age assessment model. In terms of guidance the QA comments could be taken on board. At the first meeting there was a sense of the numbers refused at the first point. They didn't have the details of the number of appeals however.

JD said that in terms of in-house social work things were ok. They are talking of one-stop shop assessments with period of assessment lasting a few days. There were different views in terms of how it fits in with LAC.

KG said they had gone over old ground but that it was needed. Actions weren't agreed there but circulated afterward so it wasn't clear who was taking it forward.

JH said that they were trying to develop the format and that Liam Byrne has requested a meeting with the commissioner for children. They are trying to bring forward each of the participants to ask them what they do and assess how good the assessments are.

JH confirmed that there were various pitfalls – not everyone meant the same thing when referring to a Social Worker assessment.

PN felt this needed to be clarified for example where CAF would fit in.

JH said that assessment is a process and not an immediate outcome but that LA's may come to a conclusion on day one with their own expertise. Failing that then the individual should go through a longer assessment process.

SL asked who does what at each stage as we should accept that UKBA will take a

view. He felt that they should separate out the Social Worker content rather than it take place in the assessment centre.

KG felt that there was a third issue: How do we deal with disputes? She thought that this needed to be broader and needs to fit in with the reform process and made more comprehensive.

The content of the next two meetings will be:

3rd Meeting – 29 April – Paediatrics report and other methods
4th Meeting – 19 May – X-ray present/legal issue

SL – We need to have practice guidance and protocols as a separate entity.

RR – Process needs to be finite.

KG – Need to look at timescales as it can't always be done rapidly.

SL disagreed – the content and context of Social Workers was enough.

6. Update on work with 'People with no recourse to public funds' - Olivia Fellas

Sharing information and good practice amongst LA's and other agencies

- Joint event with Red Cross held on 25 February in Manchester, was very successful with over 80 people attending. Full event report available on www.islington.gov.uk/nrpfnetwork the next event will be held on 28 May in Birmingham and will focus on children and families with NRPF.
- Olivia attended the All Wales Stakeholder group meeting to discuss issues Welsh authorities are encountering.
- Presented at the Luton Domestic Violence Forum conference, looking at issues of domestic violence and NRPF.

Work with Govt departments to raise the practical and policy issues of NRPF.

- Report submitted to Domestic and Sexual Violence Unit and the BIA regarding the support needs of people fleeing domestic violence who have NRPF.
- Mtg with BIA, LGA and LaCors on 2 April to further discuss key issues facing local authorities, incl.: intelligence sharing; combating criminality and engagement with workplace enforcement partnerships.

- Network has been invited to sit on the Voluntary Return Steering Group meetings.

Facilitate reimbursement for LA's of the costs of providing support to people with NRPF.

- We are still gathering information re costs and numbers from local authorities. Responses from 35 authorities have identified spending of approx £21 million in supporting just under 2000 clients.

Develop a strategic response to NRPF

- Information currently being gathered regarding access to Freedom Passes. Some councils have placed restrictions on entitlement to a Freedom Pass being linked to receiving DLA.
- Work due to begin on developing further practice guidance with a focus on assessing families with NRPF.

7. LGA updates – Emma Jenkins

Liam Byrne MP is attending the next LGA Asylum and Refugee Task Group 5-06-08 to discuss the next steps for section nine with a view to involving local authorities in future work

Case Resolution

1st Stage of clearing the older family case load has nearly finished

EJ - UKBA have identified four areas of priority for them for the next stage, but local authorities may wish to negotiate other areas such as UASC or NRPF.

8. UKBA updates – Joe Heatley

There is ongoing work to introduce the 'code of practice'.

UKBA are arranging stakeholder events regionally. Internal meetings to be held in the mornings and meetings with external parties in the afternoons.

He has been working with CAF/CASS to produce a protocol which will deal with the increasing number of family's with criminal and immigration issues, inline with public

& private law.

Out of the 'Family removals review' many LA's are providing info to UKBA with ad-hoc agreements. JH said that they should be codified.

They are also looking to codify internal policies and put them on the website and then look at working agreements.

3rd country removals

UKBA believes a high level of absconding and risk with the 3 days notice of removal.

There is a need to gather a risk assessment of absconding - but not notifying LA's or foster carers means that they are put in a difficult situation.

JH will come back to PN with a report for her.

JH

Evidence & Enquiry Unit

Need to allow us to talk to UKBA – JH to put this in writing to PN – this included managing racial cases.

JH

Discussion around protocol

Re a way forward. JH is to send a protocol to update where things are up to and will invite a representative from the Taskforce us along to the CAFCASS meeting.

9. **ENARO – European Exchange – Mary Blanche & Karen Goodman**

ENARO, the European Network of Asylum Reception Organizations, is an association which is designed to foster operational co-operation through the exchange of staff, good practices and policies. 13 European statutory asylum reception providers, either through law or through contract to national ministries, are members. As of April 2008, membership is as follows:

<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>The Netherlands</i>	<i>Norway</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>Finland</i>
<i>Republic of Ireland</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>	<i>Italy</i>	
<i>Belgium</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>Malta</i>	

ENARO membership allows for one member per country and membership is

concluded on the basis of remit and expertise. This means that, as well as containing many important national agencies, ENARO members may also come from outside central government structures where they have particular responsibilities or expertise. Examples include local authorities (e.g. Kent), non-governmental agencies (Danish Red Cross) and private providers that work under contract to the state. (HERO, Norway). Following the 10th European Conference in Malta in March 2008 other EU countries have expressed an interest in joining the ENARO network.

KG expressed that Kent were happy to co-ordinate.

Expressions of interest were invited from other LA's.

MB gave encouragement saying that they had found it useful.(As per the paper circulated with the Agenda to this meeting)

Hillingdon, Birmingham & Manchester all showed an interest.

Kent's proposal was agreed - the Task Force are to set up a sub group to oversee and coordinate a cooperative approach to ENARO across a number of local authorities, and to share the benefits of membership. KG will arrange and send emails - all info will be sent through LC so she can circulate to the group. **KG/LC**

10. **AOB**

NRUC Update – Grace Ashaye

Training:

NRUC has completed the first round of training for all Local Authorities in the use of the system. This training has encompassed the changes and improvements which were made to the system at the end of last calendar year.

Pilot:

The improvements to the system that were identified by the pilot have been completed and implemented.

UK BA:

The UK Border Agency is currently updating their own data processes in the view to supply NRUC with more precise feed and eliminate duplicate entries.

Communications:

NRUC has devised a communication strategy to improve and strengthen links between NRUC and local authorities nationally. NRUC will produce a spring edition

newsletter and **seeks contribution from the ADCS**, UK Borders and the DCSF. NRUC will send info to the group via LC

DCSF:

After a security review the DCSF has been cleared to proceed with their ContactPoint Database and NRUC have been identified as a source for the data and have received a letter of grant to pay for the necessary changes to their system in order to manage the data exchange. This letter is currently pending agreement with Westminster City Council's Departmental Contracts Board.

Local Authority Partnerships:

NRUC continues to remind local authorities of the importance of inputting and updating information on the system. They continue developments to provide a robust system, work in partnership with LA's and the HO and create links with stakeholder involved with the safeguarding and protection of young children.

JH raised a few points:-

- NRUC is part of the UKBA UK action plan.
- There is some doubt about the grant.
- Uncertainty about how long ContactPoint Database may take to complete.
- Is UKBA to LA's the right vehicle for collection of referrals for victims of trafficking?
- How would we go about working and reporting jointly?

GA confirmed that they would invite UKBA to a meeting.

GA

SL felt that there needed to be a discussion within this group about the implications on the move of NRUC and that maybe that could be added to the next agenda. PN agreed.

11. Next Meeting

**Monday 21 July 2008
11.00am – 1.00pm (Lunch from 1.00pm)
Room 3c Overseas House, Manchester**

Manchester cannot attend today.

Their update is below....

Doc 3

Gough, Wayne - CMY P&R

Subject: FW: Information re Manchester City Council's Position:

Attachments: Agenda for the Joint Councils oct08.doc

-----Original Message-----

From: Colin Elliot [mailto:colin.elliott@manchester.gov.uk]

Sent: 14 October 2008 8:29

To: Blanche, Mary - CED

Cc: Councillor Basil Curley; Pauline Newman; Nicola Rea

Subject: RE: Information re Manchester City Council's Position:

Dear Mary,

Please see below in advance of today's meeting of Joint Councils. We are happy for the financial information below to be circulated within the meeting but not more widely due to its sensitivity:

Manchester City Council remains keen to engage with the UKBA with the aim of improving standards and the efficiency of services provided to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

However whilst we are happy to continue discussions with UKBA re the UASC Reform Project we could only consider moving to become a specialist authority for the placement of UASC from other areas if all operational, legislative, financial and other risks are assessed as being manageable.

In the current financial year Manchester City Council faces a projected shortfall (of approximately £677k) in respect of supporting UASC aged under 18 years.

We also face a projected shortfall (of approximately £320k) in respect of supporting former UASC aged over 18 years.

In light of our past experience and the current financial risks highlighted above we cannot agree to accept UASC transferred from elsewhere in the country unless we are sure that all additional costs incurred by the local authority will be met in full by Government.

Councillor Curley is keen to maintain a positive and constructive dialogue with the Home Office (UKBA) re this matter, with the aspiration that by working together we may all be able to find ways to improve current arrangements.

Having said that he is clear that in order for Manchester is to become a specialist authority for the placement of UASC Government must address the funding issues and tensions in public policy and legislation that have so often been highlighted by the local government and professional associations, and the Joint Councils.

I hope this information helps to clarify Manchester City Council's position.

Let me know if you want to discuss
Best wishes
Colin

Colin Elliott

14/10/2008

Joint Councils' Meeting - 14/10/08

Paul - Confirmed attendees for this afternoon's meeting:

Amanda Honey

Keith Abbott

James Macintosh (subbing for Karen Goodman)

Wayne Gough (notes)

Graeme Trott - Hammersmith & Fulham

Andy Ferguson - Hammersmith & Fulham

Cllr David Simmonds - Deputy Leader Hillingdon

Fran Fonseca - Oxfordshire

Cllr Louise Chapman - Oxfordshire

Bob Spencer - Hounslow

Alan Russell - Liverpool

Should read
Alan Renshall