



23rd January 2009

Dear Colleague

Re: UKBA Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Reform Programme

The thrust of the Governments UASC Reform Programme is to reduce the pressure of high numbers of UASC in London and the South East; reduce the number of authorities UK-wide that are supporting UASC and rationalise cost and ensure consistency of provision.

The YH Region has been approached by UKBA and asked to consider whether it would be interested in engaging with this reform process and provide accommodation and care for UASC intake into the UK in the future.

UKBA are looking to work either regionally or with individual local authorities to develop 'specialist' authority capacity that will provide core care for this cohort of children and maintain a level of expertise regarding their asylum claim and possible outcomes.

The programme is supported by the Local Government Association as a means of providing these children with the specialist care and support they need. This support is based upon a full-cost reimbursement principle, which UKBA are sensitive to.

UKBA recognise that they do not have the expertise within their organisation to develop a support specification, and as such are keen that local authorities engage with them and bring their own specification, with likely costs and possible numbers to the table.

The YHRMP and GOYH are keen to enable regional local authorities to engage in a positive and proactive discussion on this issue, and develop a response to the UKBA programme.

On the 13th of January 2009 we hosted a regional information event at which we discussed the merits of the programme and a proposed outline of what a regional specification might look like.

The event was well attended by representatives from both existing asylum teams and from a number of Children's Services Departments. The key outcomes of the event were as follows:

- Attendees felt a regional bid would be the best option
- Attendees recognised the merits of the reform programme but expressed a number of concerns:
 - No spec forthcoming from the Home Office thus no clear picture of what is required.
 - Lack of capacity in the region to develop regional engagement and a potential bid.



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- Need to engage with a broader cohort of local authorities, including those outside of the ten already in contract with the Home Office for the provision of adult and family accommodation under the dispersal programme.
- Resolution of the post-18 / leaving care funding issue

- Attendees were keen to engage with Senior Strategic Managers, particularly in Children's Services, to give a clear steer on the potential future development of this programme both in individual authorities and as a regional bid.

It would be helpful if your regional ADCS group would take some ownership of this programme and work with us to consider whether as a region we can respond to the Home Office Programme.

Your support and expertise in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Williams
YH Regional Migration Partnership