

Committees: Community and Children's Services Policy and Resources	Dates: 12 July 2019 19 September 2019
Subject: Pledge of support for the "Our Turn" campaign	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision
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Summary

The City of London Corporation has been asked to make a pledge of support to the "Our Turn" campaign which commits to resettle 10,000 additional asylum-seeking and refugee children each year over ten years if central government were to create a new fully funded scheme.

This report seeks support for such a commitment.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- pledge to resettle five additional asylum-seeking and refugee children each year for ten years as part of a fully funded government scheme as proposed by the Our Turn campaign.

Main Report

Background

1. The Our Turn campaign is calling for the establishment of a new 'Children at Risk' resettlement scheme to bring 10,000 asylum-seeking and refugee children to the UK over the next 10 years. It is led by the organisation Safe Passage, working in partnership with the Alf Dubs Children's Fund.
2. The scheme seeks to build on and extend Britain's existing resettlement commitments - the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), which is due to expire in 2020, and the "Dubs Amendment" which will conclude when it has transferred 480 unaccompanied refugee children to the UK from other countries in Europe.
3. The campaign aims to demonstrate to government the willingness of local authorities to voluntarily resettle more children if adequate funding is provided by government to support them to do so.

4. To deliver the aim of 10,000 children resettled over 10 years would require each local authority to resettle three children per year were all to participate. However, the campaign asks local authorities to pledge more than three places to ensure enough places are offered.

Current Position

5. The City Corporation currently provides statutory care to 24 looked-after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), and ongoing support to a further 20 young people who have left care, but who entered services as UASC. Typically, young people who are UASC come into care in their late teens, and our support extends until they are 25.
6. The City Corporation is committed to providing an outstanding level of care and support to the children and young people it looks after. Social work support is structured to provide young people with continuity of social worker throughout their care. Accommodation is provided by foster families or (for some older young people) semi-independent living projects. The City Corporation provides extra tuition to support educational progress – including a programme run jointly with the City of London School. For those progressing into further or higher education, bursary support is provided. The City Corporation ensures children in our care have access to leisure activities and holidays. For those leaving care we prioritise them for our social housing.
7. Given the size and business focus of the Square Mile, children in the care of the City Corporation are placed in other local authority areas. To that extent the City Corporation competes with the host local authorities (and others) for what can be scarce resources.
8. The care and support provided to UASC in its care is funded by the government and the City Corporation. The Department's budget to support UASC in 2019/20 is £795,000 against which it will receive £264,000 in Government grant for this purpose.

Proposals

9. The City Corporation is asked to make an in-principle pledge to resettle an additional number of unaccompanied and vulnerable children in support of the Our Turn campaign. This is contingent on central government creating a new fully funded scheme to resource the resettlement.
10. No specified number is requested. The campaign only asks supportive authorities to pledge more than three a year for 10 years – which is the minimum required across the country to meet their target of 10,000 children.
11. Children looked after by the City Corporation remain in care or receiving our support for several years. Therefore, if Member's are supportive of the campaign, it is proposed that the City Corporation pledges to take five additional young people each year.

Implications

12. The Our Turn campaign seeks a scheme fully funded by the Government. The current funding formula does not meet the full cost to the City Corporation of supporting these children. The Home Office has recently reviewed and increased the funding for UASC up to the age of 18 years. This will reduce the current cost to the City Corporation of supporting these young people, but not fully meet it.
13. The Home Office has further committed to review the funding support for UASC who are supported as care leavers beyond the age of 18.
14. The commitment of this campaign is to a fully funded scheme. However, it should be noted that increased levels of provision could require additional social work and commissioning resources that may not be covered by funding.
15. Local authorities already have a legal duty to protect and support unaccompanied migrant children as soon as a child is referred to a local authority or is found in the local authority area.
16. The campaign is consistent with the Corporate Strategy objective to “contribute to a flourishing society”.

Conclusion

17. The City Corporation is committed to supporting those children and young people it provides care to – the vast majority of whom are UASC. It further recognises the vital role that local authorities play in supporting vulnerable unaccompanied children.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

Community & Children's Services Committee, 8th May 2019: Request for additional support for unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children

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