

# Information

## For County Councillors

From:	Orla Dunn, Consultant in Public Health Julie Skorupka, Strategic Manager – Children Looked After and Leaving Care Services
Date:	16 December, 2016
To:	All County Councillors

## Update: Syrian resettlement programme and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

### Introduction

This is an update on Somerset's multi-agency work to resettle Syrian refugee families and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

This work supports nationwide, Government-led initiatives. Decisions about where families and children are resettled are taken jointly, led by the availability of services to support them without undue impact on local residents, notably the availability of school places.

Both schemes have liaised closely with local groups of volunteers and this support has contributed greatly to the work.

We will endeavour to keep local members updated about any resettlements of refugee families or UASC children in your divisions and offer a contact for discussion and more information if required.

### Syrian resettlement programme

The Government has pledged to take 20,000 Syrian refugees over a five-year period and sought volunteer councils to support the scheme.

In March, Somerset's district councils, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the County Council agreed a joint response to the Government's request, agreeing to welcome an initial six families. Following their successful resettlement, in August a decision was taken to expand this to accommodate a further 30 families over three years. This approach and these numbers are consistent with other local authorities in the South West.

Eight families (totalling 16 adults and 15 children) have so far been resettled in Somerset: Four in Taunton Deane, two in South Somerset and two in Mendip. They have been accommodated through the private rented sector and are making good progress with resettlement and becoming accustomed to their new surroundings.

We expect to welcome more families in the New Year, but decisions have not yet been made about numbers, timing and locations.

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

All local authorities across the country are taking part in the dispersal of UASC. A new duty to share in the 'dispersal' of unaccompanied asylum seekers is in the Immigration Act 2016.

As the authority responsible for vulnerable children, the County Council's Children's Service is coordinating the response. Please note: the County Council's current inadequate Ofsted rating for Children's Service has no bearing on this. South West Councils ([www.swcouncils.gov.uk](http://www.swcouncils.gov.uk)) is leading on the allocation of children to individual authorities in the region.

In the 12 months from August, Somerset is expecting to resettle 71 UASC. There were already five UASC children in Somerset before this Government initiative.

To date, eight children have been placed: six in Mendip and two in Sedgemoor. Of the eight, seven live in shared, supported accommodation and one is in foster care. We will be actively seeking to recruit foster carers for UASC children.

We expect more children to be resettled in the coming weeks and months, but at this stage we do not know the exact numbers, timing or locations.

## Questions and Answers

Please find attached question and answer documents about both of these schemes.

For more information contact:	<p><u>Syrian Resettlement Programme</u> Name: Orla Dunn, Consultant in Public Health Email: <a href="mailto:odunn@Somerset.gov.uk">odunn@Somerset.gov.uk</a> Telephone: 07795 286 935</p> <p><u>Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children scheme</u> Name: Julie Skorupka, Strategic Manager – Children Looked After and Leaving Care Services Email: <a href="mailto:Julie.skorupka@somerset.gov.uk">Julie.skorupka@somerset.gov.uk</a> Telephone: 07866 784182</p>
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