

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

Children from Abroad Seeking Safety

CYPE Scrutiny Commission: 19 June 2024

Lead director: Laurence Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of children seeking safety who come to Leicester having arrived from abroad seeking safety, often referred to technically as “Unaccompanied Asylum- Seeking Children”. The report should be read in conjunction with the presentation which provides a more detailed analysis of the population profile, together with any trends.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 The Children Young People and Education Commission are asked to note the information in the report.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 Updates on the Immigration, Migration & Asylum are provided regularly to the Housing Scrutiny Commission, and the Head of Service for Housing works closely with Children and Young People’s Services to monitor the impact of new arrival children and young people seeking safety on housing.
- 3.2 The Local Authority are actively involved in regional arrangements with the Department for Education to identify and support children seeking safety. Liaison also occurs at a national level with the Home Office in respect of individual children and young people and the National Transfer Scheme.
- 3.3 Whilst to council has continued to meet its obligations in respect of children and young people seeking safety, this has had an impact on resource allocation across children and young people’s and education services and

housing together with our statutory partners including health services. These additional pressures continue to be monitored and are part of the regional and national dialogue with the Home Office and the Department for Education.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

- 4.1 This is a summary report which is supported by a more detailed presentation on the trends and population profiles of children and young people seeking safety.

5. Detailed report

- 5.1 Leicester City currently supports 38 Children Seeking Safety who arrived unaccompanied from abroad and are eligible for support as Children Looked After. This represents a small proportion of the 611 children and young people who are currently looked after and is an increase on the previous year.
- 5.2 As Children Looked After the Local Authority has the same duties as Corporate Parents to ensure these children's social care, health and education needs are met until their eighteenth birthday when they become eligible for further assistance and support as adult care leavers.
- 5.3 Most children and young people coming to the city seeking safety are older adolescents. The largest group of young people who are being supported are aged 17, although the ages range from 14-24 years. The Local Authority Leaving Care Teams currently supports 64 young adults, who arrive unaccompanied from abroad and were subsequently looked after, who are eligible for support from the ages of 18-25. This represents a growing number of the total number of 301 Care Leavers currently supported.
- 5.4 The numbers of children seeking safety are impacted by seasonal factors with higher numbers in summer months whilst there is an annual trend in children becoming eligible care leavers from 01 January each year where age

assessments are required, and children seeking safety having arrived from abroad are provided with a designated date of birth as 01 January.

- 5.5 The overwhelming majority of children seeking safety are male with the Children Looked After Service currently only supporting one female child. Whilst children and young people seeking safety come from a diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the largest single group are from Afghan heritage, followed by Iranian and Syrian ethnicity with predominantly Kurdish heritage, and then Eritrean and Sudanese.
- 5.6 There are three main pathways for Children Seeking Safety. Most children and young people are identified and transferred to Leicester as part of a National Transfer Scheme overseen by the Home Office. The scheme is based on a formula of 0.1% of the total child population of the city. The National Transfer Scheme was set up following increased number of arrivals of children and young people at ports, and the surrounding authorities unable to manage the numbers. To share the responsibility for these children across the UK the National Transfer Scheme was implemented by the Home Office. 87 children have transferred to Leicester on this scheme to date including five children who have transferred on the scheme since 01 April 2024.
- 5.7 A smaller number of children and young people are either spontaneous arrivals outside of the national transfer scheme or transfer from Home Office supported hotels when they identify as children seeking safety. One young person has transferred from the hotel route since April 2024 and there have been no spontaneous arrivals since 01 April.
- 5.8 As the age profile of children and young people seeking safety is mainly over 17 years, most of the young people being supported live in semi-independent accommodation in the community, with a smaller number of younger children living in foster care or children's residential homes. These arrangements are subject to the same safeguarding and quality assurance systems that are in place for all children looked after and care leavers. This includes regular care plan and pathway plan reviews by a named social worker or leaving care

advisor, visiting arrangements and tailored support agreed with the young person and access to advocacy support.

- 5.9 Children and young people who are seeking safety are supported with integration into their local communities in accordance with their religious and cultural preferences. This may include support offered by churches, mosques, and temples together with services offered by local voluntary and community groups such as the centre project that provides a dedicated youth space and with advice and support for young people seeking safety.
- 5.10 Children who are seeking safety and who are looked after are supported by the Virtual School Team to integrate into local schools and are provided with a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities that are provided to all our children looked after. Our Virtual School also work with a range of organisations to provide additional post curricular enrichment activities such as Bull Frog Arts.
- 5.11 Young people who are seeking safety and are eligible for support as care leavers are provided with careers advice from our Information Advice and Guidance Service for support with employment, and training. This may include support for ESOL courses and access to local training providers.
- 5.12 Children seeking safety who come to Leicester having arrived from abroad may have experienced trauma and have complex unmet health needs. As with all children looked after, children seeking safety will be provided with an initial health assessment by a designated health professional to identify their health needs which will inform their care plan. Children who arrive from abroad will be provided with translators and interpreters to attend health clinics and be referred to specialist health services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services where appropriate.
- 5.13 Adult arrivals who are seeking safety and then claim to be under the age of 18 years following their arrival are subject to age assessments. This requires additional professional social worker and independent support and interpreter

services and may result in a young person either becoming looked after or ceasing to be looked after and not eligible for further support.

- 5.14 Adults who have not had their age assessment verified and who subsequently have their asylum claim declined can either make their way to the originating country independently or can join a Home Office scheme to return them home. They have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) other than specific Home Office grants.
- 5.15 The Department is involved in joint working at a regional level including exploration of a regional legal resource for children seeking safety, regional age assessment arrangements and the piloting of a regional foster care scheme for children seeking safety.
- 5.16 Childrens Social Care and Education will continue to work collaboratively across the council and with strategic partners to ensure that support can be planned and services integrated for children seeking safety who come to Leicester having arrived from abroad.