Conclusion of the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) funding review

I am writing to let you know that the UASC Funding Review has reached a conclusion and to share details of the changes to funding arrangements that will be implemented from April 2019.

I would firstly like to express my sincere gratitude for the incredibly valuable work local authorities undertake in supporting vulnerable young asylum seekers. Please be assured I fully recognise the extent of your contribution and the fact this is made in often challenging financial and operational circumstances. I hope the outcome of the review will provide a solid basis for us to move forward in our shared commitment to this group of children and young people. I also wanted to acknowledge that an earlier resolution to the review would have been welcomed. Unfortunately, this was not possible as time was needed to fully consider the detailed evidence on the costs and challenges faced by authorities in supporting UASC, against the other pressures faced by the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System.

The evidence – gathered by working closely with partners in the local government sector, and enriched by all who contributed – has been key to reaching a conclusion. I would like to thank all contributors, including Upper Tier and Unitary Local Authorities, NGOs, and members of the working group formed of the Local Government Association (LGA), Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) and Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs).

Following this process, I have decided that, despite the challenging financial context across government, the funding available should be increased. This will be achieved by uplifting the rates currently paid at £71, £91 and £95 (all per UASC per night) to £114. The changes will apply to care provided from 1 April 2019 onwards and will be reflected in a revised Funding Instruction.

As well as providing a greater contribution to local authorities support costs, these changes address feedback that the existing rate structure was overly complex. I hope you consider these uplifts as evidence of the Home Office’s commitment to supporting your vital work with UASC. Further consideration will be given to UASC funding in the next Spending Review, which will also consider the evidence base for support costs for former UASC who are being supported as care leavers.
I know many local authorities have committed to the principle of supporting children relocated under s67 of the Immigration Act (the ‘Dubs Amendment’) but have felt unable to identify suitable placements due to financial pressures. The UK has a proud history for offering protection to those who need it and local authorities play a vital role in helping the Government deliver this important commitment. I am therefore hopeful the increase in available funding for UASC will enable those authorities to reconsider this position and offer places to vulnerable children who have been identified and are waiting to be placed.

Whilst there has understandably been a focus on the UASC tariff rates, I am pleased the review also considered a wider set of issues that affect UASC and local authorities. Work has already begun to take forward a range of activity which should be of benefit to local authorities. These include providing funding for family assessments prior to the arrival of children through the Dublin III Regulation, and streamlining the payment process to make it easier for local authorities to claim the UASC grant.

The evidence also demonstrated specific needs and issues around UASC who have turned 18 and are being supported by local authorities as Care Leavers. In light of the important and wide-ranging suggestions made, separate work was initiated to examine the challenges local authorities face. The feedback from local authorities provided valuable insights, including on the processes which drive costs in the system for the Home Office and authorities. We are now working to address these issues and the UASC Governance Board and UASC Funding Working Group will continue to be updated on progress as this develops.

Thank you again for the support many of you have given to the UASC Funding Review and work on former UASC care leavers. I look forward to continuing to work closely with you in the future.

I have also sent a copy of this letter to your Chief Executive.

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Minister of State for Immigration