



Department
for Education

Department for Education

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Date: 13th March

Dear DCS

We would like to thank you for the valuable work you do in caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children (UASC). We recognise the significant pressures and role that some of you face in caring for these vulnerable young people. We are writing to provide some guidance for local authorities on meeting statutory duties to accommodate and care for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children in light of the unprecedented circumstances resulting from Covid-19. We recognise that you will be concerned about keeping your workforce, families and young people safe. Current PHE guidance is that health risks from catching the virus remain low. We have attached the links to relevant PHE guidance to help you take steps to minimise the spread of the virus.

As you are aware local authority duties to accommodate and care for UASC as a looked after child remain. However, we recognise that this duty needs to be met having regard to the need to minimise the spread of the virus and in accordance with PHE guidance. **The latest PHE guidance is that self-isolation is only necessary where symptoms are exhibited. Health risks from catching the virus remain low.**

Where first contact is made with the police or a Home Office Official they will make an assessment as to whether the person is symptomatic, following PHE guidance, if they are symptomatic they will take appropriate initial action to isolate the young person and contact the relevant local authority. At the same time, local authorities are required to continue to meet their statutory duties to accommodate and care for the child once they are notified that the child is in their area. In keeping with PHE's current advice, where the young person is asymptomatic immediate steps should be taken to accommodate them following all the usual processes.

Where the young person is symptomatic, immediate steps should be taken to provide accommodation that enables appropriate isolation. Further advice on options and support available will follow in coming days. We recognise that finding suitable accommodation in

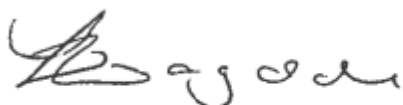
these circumstances is extremely challenging for many local authorities as well as identifying staff who are available to transport and care for these young people. We are extremely grateful for the efforts that local authorities are making to continue to care for their young people during these challenging circumstances. We also recognise the concerns about using unregistered and unregulated placements and will be working with Ofsted to address this in the guidance in the context of minimising the spread of the virus.

We are keen to continue working at pace with ADCS and those local authorities most affected to support local authorities in the provision of suitable accommodation and support. We recognise that local authorities possess significant operational expertise and intelligence and welcome any further collaboration on this including where there is accommodation that can be used.

Further advice and guidance can be found on the PHE website. Some useful links are attached to this letter. These are subject to change and should be reviewed regularly. You may also find it helpful to make contact with your local PHE health protection team for further advice.

We will be keeping this area under close review and are happy to be contacted if we can be of further help and support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frances Oram' followed by a flourish.

Frances Oram and Sophie Langdale

Directors, Children's Social Care, Practice and Workforce