



Asylum Accommodation Support Transformation Briefing Note - November 2017

Overview

What is AAST trying to achieve?

The Asylum Accommodation and Support Transformation (AAST) project has been established to design, develop and procure the future model for asylum accommodation and support, replacing the existing COMPASS arrangements when they expire in Sept 2019.

Vision

Through extensive engagement with stakeholders from across different sectors we have developed a vision around which we will make decisions to drive the project forward.

AAST will deliver a VfM and affordable accommodation and support system which effectively delivers the UK's statutory and international obligations to asylum seekers, supporting the operation of effective immigration controls.

The system will ensure the safety and security of service users and their host communities. Services will be delivered as consistently & efficiently as possible, at a level which is proportionate in comparison with the services offered to UK nationals:

- **Service users** will experience an accessible and easy to navigate system, which delivers consistent and compassionate support. The system will protect the vulnerable, keep service users safe, orientate them to live in their communities and prepare them to act on the outcome of their asylum claim.
- **Providers** will supply a service of which they are proud, securing a broad supply of accommodation and appropriate support services. The department will take practical steps to give them greater certainty on demand, with a sustainable balance of risk, an appropriate rate of return and scope for innovation in delivery.
- **Communities** will feel involved in the support of destitute asylum seekers, working in partnership with UKVI and others to support community cohesion as service user's transition through the asylum system.



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Scope

The Home Office has a legal duty to re-compete for the services of providing accommodation and support to asylum seekers; the project team has to replace the contracts that deliver Asylum Accommodation, Support and Transport.

As part of an end-to-end systems approach, the project team is also looking at other functions across the wider asylum system that could be improved or adapted as part of this process, including: Routing and Allocation and Inspections and Compliance.

The processing of asylum support payments is not in scope of this project. Options for this service are being developed by another team within UKVI. The project team is working closely with this team to identify and manage dependencies and interfaces.

Engagement to Date

The project team has undertaken extensive engagement with local government, non-governmental organisations and potential suppliers since the beginning of the project in September 2016. This has allowed us to understand the experiences, both positive and negative, of the current arrangements and aspirations for the future. The information obtained through this process has influenced the design of the future service provision.

The engagement team have hosted and attended a number of stakeholder events, completed written consultations, and one to one sessions with numerous organisations. The team has also carried out market sounding and consultation to ensure there is appetite in the new contract and so that we understand the commercial drivers for change and innovation.

A summary of engagement is set out in the **Annex A**.

Design Outputs

Service Delivery Model

Over the last year, the project team have been exploring how the service can be configured to meet its requirements and what services will be delivered by each party. We analysed a range of potential delivery options.

The projects preferred delivery model and requirement changes were submitted as part of the Outline Business Case (OBC) in October 2017 and were approved by Her Majesty's Treasury and Cabinet Office in November 2017.

Our Service Delivery Model will be similar to the current operation from a structural point of view, but there will be a number of key changes to how the contracts will operate. There will be a single prime contractor providing initial accommodation, dispersed accommodation, transport and welfare services in each contract region.

Alongside the accommodation and support contracts, we will be introducing a national contract to provide Advice, Issues Resolution and Eligibility assistance, this will be known as the AIRE contract.



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Key features of the Delivery Model:

UKVI functions

- UKVI continues to operate front and back-end functions, including the routing of asylum seekers to contract regions and inspections and compliance teams to assure contract compliance and the wellbeing of Service Users;
- UKVI will continuously improve these functions, with a key focus on facilitating the more efficient exchange of data between relevant parties, in particular by working with relevant HO technology projects.

Integrated Accommodation, Support and Transport

- Initial Accommodation, Dispersed Accommodation, transport and support (including signposting and property visits) continue to be managed as an integrated service by prime contractors on a regional basis;
- Providers will be responsible for:
 - Transporting service users to and from accommodation;
 - Sourcing appropriate IA and DA and managing property standards; *and*
 - Supporting Service Users whilst they are within accommodation (incl. inductions, signposting of services, property visits and ancillary services).

The requirements for these services will be improved, as set out below.

Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Service

- Eligibility assistance and complaints, advice and guidance services will be integrated into a single, nationally operated end-to-end service. This contract will be named Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE);
- This service will provide a single point of contact for Service User complaints and issues (including those relating to accommodation and support payments), providing a centralised complaints administration and referral function;
- The service will provide advice and guidance to Service Users (including the asylum process, rights, service signposting) through a range of communication channels appropriate to Service User needs; *and*
- The service will also deliver face to face support to those who are identified as in need or more vulnerable.

The AIRE service will contain requirements for the provider to support Service Users as they transition out of the asylum support system into either mainstream services or returning to their home country. We will commence procurement for this contract in 2018.

Regional Model

The Accommodation and Support Contracts will operate as seven regional contracts. This will create separate contract regions for each of the devolved nations: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, reflecting their distinct characteristics and regulatory environments, whilst retaining four English regions. The English regions will be: the South; the Midlands and East of England; the North West; and the North East and Yorkshire and Humber.



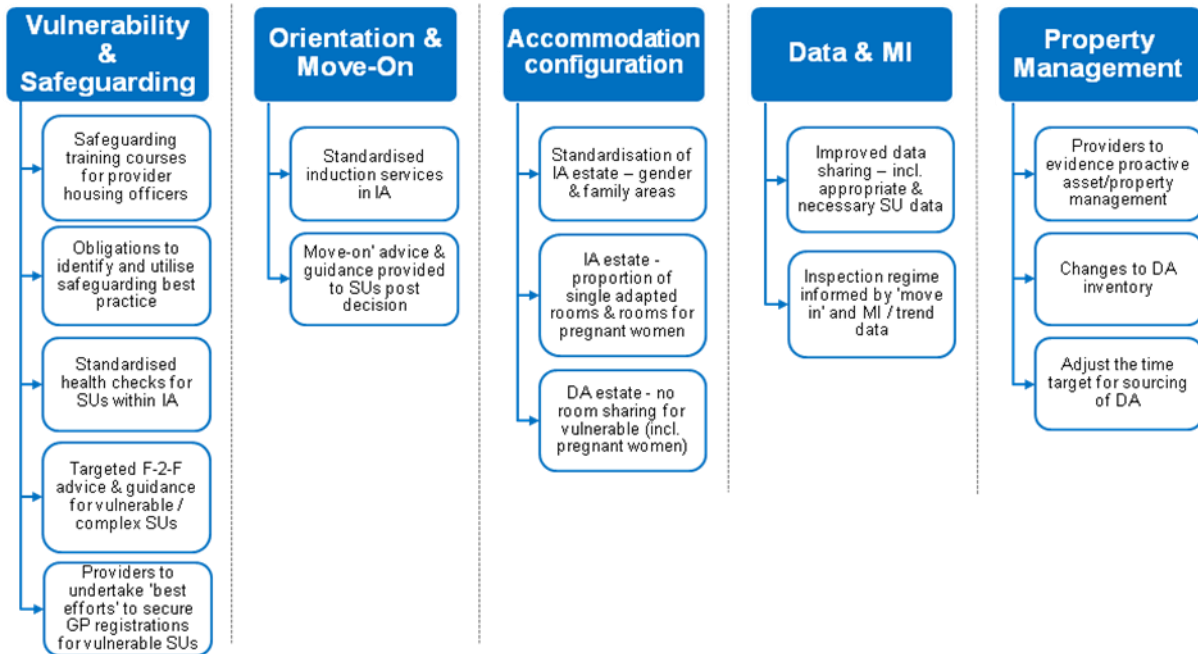
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1	Scotland
2	Northern Ireland
3	North West
4	North East, Yorkshire & Humber
5	Wales
6	Midlands & East of England
7	South

Requirements

Consolidating feedback received from internal and external stakeholders, as well as discussions with the market, enabled the project to develop a list of potential requirements changes to improve the service delivered. The project considered these changes and will introduce those changes that will provide the best value for money and the greatest improvements for Service Users. These changes can broadly be classified into five categories which are illustrated below.



Safeguarding and supporting vulnerable asylum seekers

These enhancements build on the work that the Home Office has been undertaking to ensure that safeguarding is at the forefront of everything we do. The new contracts will require providers to:

- Train their staff in safeguarding;



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- Identify and utilise safeguarding best practice;
- Introduce standardised health checks to identify specific physical and mental health needs.

Quality of Accommodation

We will require providers to:

- More proactively manage their properties;
- Operate a rigorous inspection regime;
- Standardise the Initial Accommodation estate, ensuring there are dedicated areas for women and families and more adapted rooms for service users with specific needs and for pregnant women.

Orientation

The new contracts will:

- Set out requirements to improve service user orientation to help Service Users to live in their communities and access services;
- Importantly, we will require improved data sharing, including appropriate and necessary service user data to allow relevant agencies to increasingly join up to support service users.

Driving Consistency

We will drive consistency:

- Building on good practice of the existing contract;
- And will ensure clear roles and responsibilities for our own teams, suppliers, strategic partners and OGDs;
- In addition the Performance Management Regime has been re-modelled to emphasise our focus on desired performance and positive behaviours.

Working more collaboratively with Key Partners

As well as improving the contractual arrangements, we will:

- Work more closely with local government, and embrace and utilise the compassion and enthusiasm of individuals and communities that we have seen extended to those brought to the UK on a resettlement scheme;
- We will continue to work with non-governmental organisations, voluntary, community and faith groups to supplement the support that the state provides and encourage a greater focus on their work with refugees and those seeking asylum.

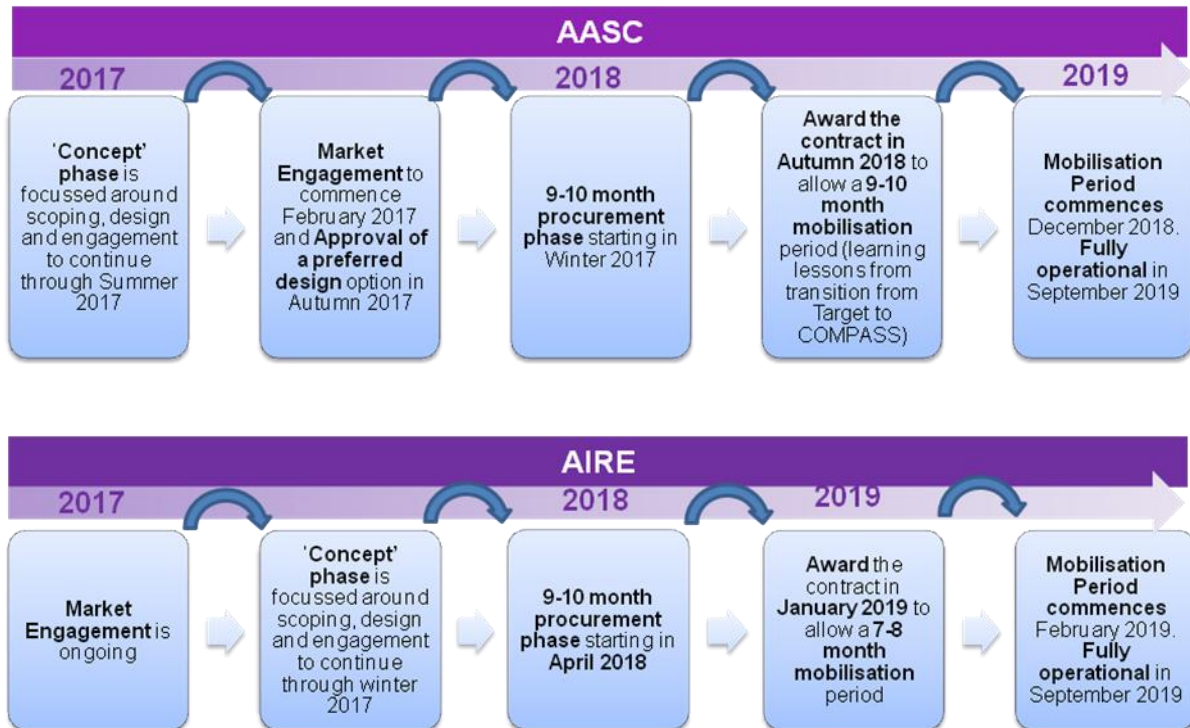
Time Scales

The new arrangements are planned to be operational by September 2019, when the current contracts come to an end.

The project milestones for both the AASC and AIRE contracts are set out in the diagrams below:



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Next Steps

In July of this year, the **Prior Information Notice (PIN)** was published in the OJEU setting out UKVI's procurement intentions. The project team **secured approval** from Cabinet Office and HM Treasury on **13 November**, confirming the design for the future asylum accommodation and support contracts, and the formal **Contract Notice** was published on **16 November 2017**.

Information which has already been published can be found here:

<http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:289909-2017:TEXT:EN:HTML&src=0>

The same information is also available on Contract Finder:

<http://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/search>

Future engagement will be conducted in accordance with Procurement Regulations, the Contract Notice **does not signal the end of the project team's discussion with stakeholders**. This briefing note marks the start of the next round of engagement to ensure the contract process is understood, to explain the approach that we are taking and encourage local authorities to engage with potential providers.

If you have any queries regarding the project, you can contact us on

AAST@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk



AAST Engagement in 2016/17

Statutory and Public Sector

- 6 Local Authority (LA) Workshops nationally (over 60 LA attended);
- 4 away days with regional Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) leads, providing information to SMPs to be shared with local government;
- LA briefing note, circulated via SMPs;
- Meetings with Devolved Governments;
- Meetings with other government departments. This work has been particularly focussing on dependencies with DCLG, DWP, Police, DoH, and LGA;
- Internal workshops; and
- Stakeholder event for stakeholders.

Third Sector

- Working with Asylum Accommodation Advisory Board;
- Written Exercise seeking feedback from non-government and voluntary sector organisations (over 125 organisations participated); and
- 4 workshops with non-government organisations.

Market Engagement

- CBI/BSA written consultation and meetings;
- Incumbent supplier sessions Market Engagement Accommodation Event held, Market Questionnaire issued;
- 121 sessions with suppliers; and
- Supplier Market Event.