



Home Office

Kevin Foster MP

Minister for Safe and Legal Migration



Will Quince MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children
and Families

Rt Hon. Yvette Cooper MP Chair,
Home Affairs Select Committee

Rt Hon. Robert Halfon MP Chair,
Education Select Committee

Mr Clive Betts MP Chair,
Housing, Communities, and Local Government Select Committee

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

23 November 2021

Dear Chairs,

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN: THE NATIONAL TRANSFER SCHEME

As you are aware, the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) was introduced to enable the transfer of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) from one local authority to another. It aims to deliver a fairer distribution of UASC across the UK to ensure these vulnerable children receive the support and accommodation they need.

Local authorities currently participate in the NTS on a voluntary basis. However, due to the extremely high intake of UASC over recent months, particularly as a result of small boat crossings on the south coast and pressures on entry local authorities, the NTS has been unable to keep up with demand. Therefore, on 21 July, the Home Office took an exceptional decision to accommodate UASC arrivals in hotels, ensuring the immediate safeguarding and welfare needs of those UASC can be met, pending their transfer to longer-term placements under the NTS.

It is vital the Government takes steps to ensure the NTS works effectively, so that children are transferred promptly and we end the use of hotels for UASC. This is a critical issue and we wanted to update you that we have today written to all local authorities with children's services, and Northern Ireland's Department of Health, notifying them of the Home Secretary's intention to exercise powers under the Immigration Act 2016 to direct participation in the NTS and resolve this unprecedented situation.

The Home Secretary has not taken this decision to give notice lightly and we, along with the Minister for Levelling Up and Communities who has endorsed this approach, would like to express our sincere gratitude for the invaluable support from many local authorities throughout the UK who have stepped up and provided crucial placements to vulnerable young asylum-seekers, including those who have recently begun to on a voluntary basis.

The Government has already demonstrated its commitment to supporting local authorities to provide the necessary care for UASC. To this end, in June of this year we announced a new package of measures designed to encourage local authority participation in the NTS, including improved funding which will continue to apply to transfers made under a direction. The package included:

- a new voluntary national rota system reflecting pressures relating to children's services and the supported asylum population;
- an uplift to the Home Office funding rates for former-UASC care-leavers, from £240 per person per week to £270 representing a 12.5% uplift;
- the higher UASC daily rate of £143 for authorities with larger UASC numbers which will now also 'follow the child'. That is, if a UASC is transferred via the NTS from a higher rate receiving local authority the new local authority will also receive the higher rate for that child regardless of their total UASC numbers;
- support for local authorities with age assessments; and
- operating model improvements to improve the effective operation of the new scheme.

The higher UASC rate of £143 per person per night will also apply to all mandated transfers made under the scheme.

Additional modelling has been undertaken to determine how best to fairly operate an effective mandated scheme within the framework already established under the voluntary NTS. The proposed allocations have been determined in line with the principles of the national voluntary rota and take account of the children's population in each area, as well as pressures relating to their child services and supported asylum populations.

The exact numbers will be dependent on UASC intake and the length of time a mandatory scheme remains in place. The proposed allocations reflect the principle that no local authority supporting UASC at or above 0.07% of their general child population will be directed under the scheme to receive a transferred child.

As far as possible we propose to operate mandatory transfers within the framework established for the voluntary rota introduced in July. While the mandated scheme is a temporary measure to address the current crisis, its duration will be dictated by a range of factors including intake levels and how long it takes to end the use of hotels and return to an NTS that works effectively. We will keep its operation under review.

We are engaged with the relevant local government partners in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Following our written notice, those bodies will have 14 days to respond with any representations which will be considered in full. Any transfers completed by local authorities during the notice period will count towards their projected allocation.

Please be assured of the Government's continued commitment to protecting vulnerable children, including UASC. We look forward to continuing to work with local government partners in constituencies across the country and colleagues across government to achieve our shared objectives of ensuring vulnerable children and young people receive the crucial care placements and support they need. We believe this measure will address the legitimate concerns raised by members about the impact of UASC arrivals on entry local authorities as well as the use of hotels through a solution in which local authorities in all parts of the UK play their part in this important national responsibility.

We will arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Foster' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Safe and Legal Migration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Quince' with a horizontal line at the end.

Will Quince MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Children and Families