

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

County Council

4 March 2021

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rachel Powell, Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Stephen Hayes

On 21st August the Home Office, Department of Education, ADCS and LGA wrote to councils in relation to Unaccompanied Child Migrants (*sometimes referred to as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children*) stating that a crisis of care was arising in Kent due to the numbers of vulnerable young people requiring care.

The letter stated that: ‘... further emergency support is needed for the following across all parts of the UK:

- Offers of placements in your area
- Offers to take full responsibility under the Children Act 1989 for these young people
- Offers to supervise young people placed in your area
- Offers to accommodate young people directly from the Kent Intake Unit in Dover.’

(the full text can be found at

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/20200821%20joint%20letter%20re%20Kent%20crisis.pdf>)

On 28th August it was announced in local media that Powys had rejected this appeal and would not be offering a welcome to Unaccompanied Child Migrants. Many people have contacted me to deplore this decision, emphasising the compassion they feel we, as a county and a nation, should feel and our duty to show that in action.

Could you please clarify what response was given to the letter of 21st August; what action has been taken, as a Council and in collaboration with other councils, to offer a welcome to Unaccompanied Child Migrants; and the number of such children so far assisted or for whom Powys County Council has accepted responsibility under the Children Act.

Response

Housing advised Cllr Hayes last September that: “The Housing Service would not, I’m afraid, be in position on its own to welcome or accommodate Unaccompanied Child Migrants. I would suggest that our Children’s Services team would be best

placed to advise whether or not the Council has a whole could either directly accommodate or enable others to do so.”

Housing Services is not able to provide accommodation for unaccompanied children, regardless of the child’s background. This is because people under the age of 18 cannot hold a legal interest in a property by means of a tenancy agreement. Any accommodation for a 16 or 17 old unaccompanied child, if considered a ‘child in need of care and support’, would usually be provided by Children’s Services which may ask Housing Services to help source a suitable property. For unaccompanied children aged 15 or less, Children’s Services are responsible for meeting a child’s care and support needs, including accommodation.

In order for Children’s Services to accept responsibility for an unaccompanied asylum seeking child from Kent we would need to identify a placement in which a child can live.

We are working hard to increase the placement capacity but given the increase in CLA numbers during the pandemic, we have needed to place more children out of County.

We do not have suitable supported/ semi-independent accommodation in County.

These issues together mean that identifying a suitable placement is a real challenge.

We had begun to look at the options for placements so that we could offer support but following discussion between the All Wales Heads of Children’s Services, there is a proposal for Powys to take part in a National (Wales) approach to respond to the National (UK) Transfer Scheme. This will provide a solution that will better suit the needs of young people.