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Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

I refer to the above and am requesting information in relation to same under the Freedom of Information Act.

We are defining a UASC as “an individual, who is under 18 when the asylum application is submitted, is not being cared for by an adult who by law who has responsibility to do so, is separated from their parents and has applied for asylum in the UK in her own right.”

Please can you provide the following information?

In providing a response to this Freedom of Information request the Belfast H&SC Trust data is based on UASC who present as new entrance to the Trust for each year.

1/ How many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) were there in your Trust area in:

a/	1 Jan 2023 to date (6/6/23)?	10
b/	2022?	16
c/	2021?	15
d/	2020?	19

2/ How many UASC in your Trust area were accommodated in hotels/Air B&Bs/unregulated accommodation in:

Between 2020 and 6/6/23 a total of 7 UASC were place in unregulated accommodation at the point of their arrival in NI, this accommodation was private rental private rental accommodation with on-site support provided by an external provider.

a/ 1 Jan 2023 to date (6/6/23)?

7 of the 10 new arrivals during this period available of unregulated accommodation, less than 5 were placed in unregulated accommodation at the point of their arrival into NI which was Private rental accommodation with on-site support provided by an external provider

b/ 2022?

15 out of the 16 new arrivals during this period available of unregulated accommodation, less than 5 were placed in unregulated accommodation at the point

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of their arrival in NI which was Private rental accommodation with on-site support provided by an external provider

c/ 2021?

7 of the 15 new arrivals availed of unregulated accommodation – none of which were placed in unregulated accommodation at the point of their arrival into NI

d/ 2020?

6 of the 20 new arrivals availed of unregulated accommodation – none of which were placed in unregulated accommodation at the point of their arrival into NI

3/ How many hotels/ Air B&Bs/unregulated accommodation in your Trust area are used to accommodate UASC?

Type of unregulated accommodation	Number
Private rental accommodation with support provided from an external provider	Less than 5
AIR B and B	Less than 5
Hotel	Less than 5
*Jointly commissioned by the HSCT and NIHE support accommodation	Less than 5
Private rental	13
Trust lead Supported Accommodation Provision from an external provider (Simon community)	Less than 5

*Joint commissioned support accommodation is provided under a contractual arrangement in line with Joint commission guidance however is notified as an unregulated placement for LAC up until the age of 18 years.

4/ What was the cost of accommodating UASC in your Trust area in:

a/ 1 Jan 2023 to date (6/6/23)?

b/ 2022?

c/ 2021?

d/ 2020?

HSC do not central collate this data and are not able to provide a return for this request. This would require a manual review of records to provide accurate and reliable data. We consider that the cost of retrieving the information would be above the 'Appropriate Limit' as defined by the FOI Act under Section 12. Section 12 makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of

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dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified as £450 for public authorities. This represents the cost of one or more person spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information.

5/ What was the average length of stay of UASC in your Trust area in:

- a/ 1 Jan 2023 to date (6/6/23)?**
- b/ 2022?**
- c/ 2021?**
- d/ 2020?**

S/UASC arriving in Northern Ireland are young people “who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom is responsible for doing so”. Upon arrival they will be immediately entitled to all of the provisions of the Children (NI) Order 1995. When they present to NI, S/UASC become Looked After Children upon entry and corporate parenting responsibility becomes the responsibility of HSCT.

Aligned to these duties is the requirement to provide safe, suitable placements and accommodation until the age of 18 years when they ceased to be looked after. These young people are also entitled to service provision under The Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002 which sets out obligations on the Trusts to support young people aged 16 plus in their transitional pathway into adulthood.

Therefore from the point of their arrival which as per quest 8 ranges from age 15 years until they reach the age of 18 years, UASC as defined by this FOI, is the responsibility of the Trust.

6/ What has been the longest length of stay of UASC in your Trust area?

Of new presentations since 2020, 712 days is the longest individual LAC episode. LAC episode ended when client turned 18, however support will be continued to be provided to young people beyond the age of 18 years when they ceased to be looked after by the HSCT, in line with Leaving and Aftercare legislation and standards.

7/ How many members of staff accompanied each UASC in each of the years 2023 to date 2022, 2021, 2020 & please give details of rank/profession (ie social worker etc)?

Each UASC will be entitled to the allocation of a Social worker at the point arrival into NI

From the age of 16 years each young people is also entitled to the allocation of a personal advisor (band 4 social care staff member) to support the transition into adulthood as per the under The Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002.

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The care planning arrangements for all LAC is overseen by a Senior social work and Principal social worker.

UASC placed in both regulated (residential and fostering) and unregulated support accommodation arrangements, either jointly commissioned or Trust lead/support provided by an external provider will have the support or social work and/or social care staff within the accommodation provided.

8/ What was the age range of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in your Trust area in the years 2022, 2021, 2020 – please give youngest to oldest.

2020 – 16 - 17

2021 – 16 - 17

2022 – 15 - 17

Please note where less than 5 has been used:

We are unable to provide an exact figure where numbers are very low. To provide this level of information would reduce numbers to discoverable limits where individuals could be identifiable. This is exempt from release under section 40(2) Personal Information relating to a third party, of the FOI Act. This information would be unfair to the individuals to release this information. Disclosure would constitute a breach of the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018.

In addition the Trust has taken into account the fact that all information disclosed in response to an FOI is disclosed to the 'world at large' and is published on the Trust website. The Trust does not consider the disclosure of this information to be fair to the individuals concerned as there is the potential risk of identification of an individual(s) which they would not expect, and which would therefore breach the fairness element of the first principle of the Data Protection Act 2018."