

By: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services  
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To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee

Date: 22 July 2015

Decision: 14/00081

Subject: Update on Millbank Reception Centre and the provision of reception accommodation for male Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children aged 16-17

Classification: Unrestricted

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## **Summary**

This provides an update on the current position with regard to the decision to close the Millbank Reception Centre and development of community based reception services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) males, aged 16-17. Recommendation:

### **Recommendation:**

The Committee is asked to:-

- a) consider and provide comment to the Cabinet Member on the information set out in the report;
  - b) note the non-implementation of decision number 14/00081, for the reasons set out in the report;
  - c) note that the decision notice will be updated online to explain the non-implementation; and
  - d) note that additional sources of accommodation for UASC are being sought.
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## **1. Background**

- 1.1. UASC who arrive in Kent are accommodated by Kent County Council (KCC) as part of the Local Authority's statutory duty towards children in care. Male UASC, aged 16-17 are accommodated at Millbank Reception Centre. In July 2014, following a sustained period of falling numbers of UASC, the Cabinet Member took a Cabinet Committee endorsed decision to close Millbank and develop a community based reception service (Key Decision 14/00081).

## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1. Between October 2014 and April 2015, KCC made two attempts to commission a support and enablement service to facilitate the use of community based accommodation for UASC. The first attempt brought no response from the market and despite extensive market engagement activity the two bids received as part of the second procurement exercise did not meet the requirements of the authority in terms of cost nor service delivery.
- 2.2. Since August 2014 there has been a steady increase in the numbers of UASC arriving in Kent. Unlike previous years, the 14/15 winter months continued to see a consistent volume of new arrivals; such that Millbank has managed high levels of occupancy of its fifty bed capacity. This pattern has accelerated further since April 2015, with unprecedented numbers of UASC arriving via the port of Dover.
- 2.3. This upward surge in the numbers of new UASC arrivals led to a decision in June 2015 to move to shared room occupancy. This has the result that, as at 3 July, there are currently 97 young people in residence, which means the Millbank reception centre is now at capacity. Given the advice from the Home Office that numbers of UASC are likely to increase, the authority is seeking additional sources of accommodation for UASC

### **3. Proposed Action**

- 3.1. As KCC have not been able to procure a support and enablement service, the proposal for a community based reception service for UASC is not viable at this time
- 3.2. Given the numbers of UASC arriving, it is not currently a viable option to close the Millbank Reception Centre. It is therefore recommended that the centre remain open and the Cabinet Member will be asked to confirm that the decision to close Millbank is rescinded.
- 3.3. Officers from SCS are working with colleagues from across the council to identify alternative accommodation solutions to meet our statutory responsibilities for UASC, both in the short and medium term
- 3.4. Officers will be meeting with the Home Office to seek support from national government in meeting the needs of these young people; inclusive of the option for a national scheme of dispersal for unaccompanied minors.

#### **Recommendation:**

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- c) note that the decision notice will be updated online to explain the non-implementation; and
- d) note that additional sources of accommodation for UASC are being sought.

#### **4. Background Documents**

Change of Reception Accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children male 16+ - Decision Report to 9 July 2014, Children's Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee.

(available at <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s47280/B5%20-%20Future%20of%20Millbank%20Reception%20Centre.pdf>)

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