

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

15th March 2022

Colum Road Assessment Centre update

Reasons for the Report

1. This report provides the Committee with information in relation to the newly refurbished Colum Road centre. The 6-bed property will be open in March 2022 and will be available for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) aged 16 and above, arriving via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) or spontaneously into the City accommodation for an initial period in order to receive wrap around support, robust assessment of needs and age assessment if required. Once ready the children will be moved on to appropriate longer term placements in line with their identified support needs.

Background – Colum Road Assessment Centre

2. It was identified that there was a lack of appropriate accommodation available to the Local Authority to be able to complete reliable age assessments of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. While age is being disputed, both during and following assessment, the person being assessed must be treated and suitably accommodated as a child. The inability to access appropriate accommodation resulted in the Local Authority placing young people a significant distance out of area which prolonged the length of the assessment having an impact on outcomes as well as increasing the costs and efficiency of completing the assessment.

3. In order to safeguard the Local Authority from the risk of legal challenge it was pertinent that a process and accommodation with assessment provision was made available to reassure the Local Authority on the reliability of the assessments being undertaken whilst also enabling a robust response to any challenge by way of Judicial Review.
4. In March 2021 Cardiff along with Newport became the lead for the National Transfer Scheme in Wales increasing the need for appropriate placements. The National Transfer Scheme intended to ensure that any participating local authority (LA) does not face a disproportionate responsibility in accommodating and looking after unaccompanied children, simply by virtue of being the point of arrival. In November 2021 this scheme was made mandatory across Wales.
5. The Colum Road Centre was established to ensure the best outcome for young people. It will ensure the Local Authority's compliance with legislation and case law and ensure that the needs of the young people are met in a timely manner.

The Colum Road Centre

6. There are 6 (en-suite) bedrooms inside the assessment centre provision. There is a downstairs sleeping office space for Salvation Army staff. There is an office space and an assessment room available for Childrens Services staff to undertake assessments.
7. Salvation Army have been commissioned to manage the building and provide day to day support for the young people living in the property.
8. The aim of the Centre is to provide an end-to-end pathway with supported accommodation and floating support provision to assist young people with their move-on to independence.
9. The centre follows a positive Pathway Model (accommodation) which has been recognised by the Local Authority and its Partners as a best practice framework that will ensure the best long-term outcome for the young people entering the assessment Centre.

10. The Colum Road Centre is near Cardiff City Centre, local shops, primary health care facilities (GPs, Dentists and Opticians) and High School where the young people can access education (ESOL classes). There are also Gyms and Leisure Centre close to the Centre which the young people can access to improve their physical and emotional wellbeing and reduce feeling loneliness as well as foster integration within the community. These facilities and services available around the Centre will enhance the ability of the Centre management and the Local Authority to meet the holistic needs of the young people placed at the Centre.
11. The Assessment Centre will be fully staffed and provide 24 hours wrap around support for the young people living in the accommodation. The staff Team will be provided by the Salvation Army and will be required throughout the day 7 days a week to provide support to the young people living in the accommodation.
12. Staff would be expected to support the young people within the living environment including where required supporting to teach them how to make meals, enabling them to perform basic life skills as well as meeting other needs highlighted above.
13. Night assistant support workers are on hand to create a safe, supportive environment for young people if they require help.

Needs of the young people accommodated

14. A range of needs will be met at the Colum Road Centre and includes (but not exclusive to)
 - **Emergency Accommodation:** The Centre will provide an emergency accommodation for a spontaneous arrival UASC at one of the rooms available at the centre.
 - **Initial accommodation provision.** The initial accommodation provided by the Centre will be for an initial period of six weeks when the wellbeing assessment and/or age assessment is undertaken, and a suitable long-term placement is

found for the young people. Young people may continue to live in this accommodation after the initial six weeks until another UASC young person requires the accommodation. This is to ensure consistency for the young people and prevents the holding of void bedroom at the Centre

- **Health Needs:** Supporting young people to attend initial health screening appointment at the Cardiff and Vale Inclusion Service (CAVHIS) and registration with the primary health care services (GP, Dentist and Optician). Also accessing emotional and mental health support
- **Educational Needs:** Supporting young people to access educational provision, especially ESOL support to improve their English Language proficiency.
- **Linguistic Needs.** The Centre will provide interpretation service for young people to be able to express their views and wishes in their preferred language.
- **Cultural Needs:** The Centre will supporting young people in a culturally sensitive way and to practice their religion in a safety environment.
- **Immigration Solicitors:** Support young people to identify Immigration Solicitors for their asylum claim and to attend appointments at the Home Office.
- **Independent living skills-** The Centre will also provide the initial opportunity for the assessment of young people's independent living skills as part of the wellbeing assessment to determine the long-term accommodation for a young person.
- **Activities and community integration:** To minimise the feeling of isolation/loneliness and improve emotional wellbeing, USAC young people will be supported at the Centre to participate in activities of their interest, such as gym and sporting activities.
- **Advocacy Support:** Liaising with NYAS advocacy service for Active Offer Advocacy provision.
- **Move on Accommodation:** The Centre will support young people's transition to move on accommodation.

Issues

15. There have been some unavoidable delays in the completion of the renovation work on the Colum Road centre. Young people arriving in Cardiff have been placed in suitable alternative accommodation.

Financial Implications

16. A financial feasibility study was completed as part of the business case for the development of the Colum Road Centre. Home office funding received for placating UASC covers a proportion of the associated costs. It is important that the remainder of the costs are found from within existing budget allocation or other external funding sources.

Legal Implications

17. There are no legal implications arising from this report

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Consider the report and identify how the committee would like to monitor progress of the Colum Road Centre.
- b) Note the information provided regarding the development of the Colum Road Centre

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Director of Children's Services
25th February 2022