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February 2003

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## **To all Schools in the Central Area**

Dear Head Teacher

### **Asylum Seekers in Norwich**

#### **Housing, Likely numbers and Length of Stay**

Norwich is now an official dispersal area for asylum seekers under the National Asylum Seekers' Service (NASS) managed by the Home Office.

'Clearsprings', the company charged with finding accommodation, has a five year contract to house approximately 250 people in the first year with a view to having an annual turnover of 400/600 people in later years. There will be an approximate ratio of 50:50 singles to families and the first three properties will be ready this February.

A group of houses and clients will have a named manager who will meet all the families' needs, accompany them to appointments etc. and through whom home/school liaison should be conducted.

The houses must be within three miles of the main post office but the nearest school place may be outside that limit. Most families will be here short term, up to 6 months as it is anticipated that decisions on the families' asylum application will be made within that period.

The top 10 countries of origin of asylum seekers entering the UK are currently: Iraq (Kurds), Zimbabwe, Somalia (not to come to Norfolk), Afghanistan, China, Iran, Turkey, Kosova, Sri Lanka and the Czech Republic.

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### **Admission procedures**

All asylum seeking children have an entitlement to education and it is estimated that when the scheme is fully developed up to 125 children could come to Norwich in a year before moving on when their application has been dealt with. This will depend, however, on the number of houses identified.

Clearsprings will give the LEA notice when a house is ready for occupation. The Admissions team in County Hall will identify school places in the area. Clearsprings will then decide whether to place single people or a family in a particular unit. Houses can become available in any area as they are rented from private landlords.

Clearsprings managers will approach the schools, take the family to the school for any meetings prior to admission and will provide interpretation for those meetings.

On request English Language Support Service (ELSS) staff will try and be present at these meetings and will facilitate liaison between the Clearsprings Managers, school and families. The Adult Education Service may be able to provide some language support for the parents.

### **Funding and LEA support**

Provision for asylum seekers now comes within the Vulnerable Children's Grant 210. A bid for funding has been made to provide some school and pupil support.

The LEA has a policy for the education of asylum seekers MI 63/02 and support to schools will be given within that policy. INSET sessions will be held in the Summer and Autumn terms.

### **School support**

Schools will not find the high mobility and lack of English easy but experience with other EAL children, mobile Traveller children and with asylum seekers already in the County shows that the following will help the children settle quickly.

- ❑ Admission within a week of arrival with a few days between the initial meeting and a start date to give staff, pupils and the family time to prepare
- ❑ Planned orientation to school
- ❑ Inclusive, not separate or different provision
- ❑ Clear and active race equality procedures
- ❑ Time to settle so that language and cognitive learning can begin

It will be important for children to have access to any uniform that may be required. The Pupil Attendance Service may be able to help in this respect.

It is, of course, important that the children are talked about and treated as children and not as 'asylum seekers' as they and their families will not need to be further burdened by the prejudices that the term may currently hold. David Sheppard, the Race Equality Advisor and staff from the ELSS will be available to talk through any issues which may arise for staff, children or parents.

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Norfolk has been given the care of these children and families. Many will have had disrupted education, all will have experienced rejection or persecution in their home country. Some may have suffered extreme trauma. It is important, therefore, that at this very sensitive time we all work together to make their time in Norfolk as welcoming as possible.

Yours sincerely  
Mike SHenstone  
Assistant Director (Pupil Access and Community Services)

Names of contacts

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