Dear Sirs

Re: Views on Destitution and Asylum in Scotland

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute views to the above Inquiry. This contribution has been prepared in response to the invitation extended to West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership Board – the local Integration Joint Board – as follows:

1. As a public service provider, what support are you able to provide to asylum seekers and what are the main barriers to providing support.

West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) has experience of providing care and aftercare to a small number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in line with their assessed needs under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This is undertaken within the broader support provided by West Dunbartonshire Council and (more generally) NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, reflective of the commitment of all parties to co-ordinating activities and providing joined-up support. The local support provided has been enhanced by the information, support and training from specialist agencies including the Scottish Refugee Council, the Aberlour Trust National Guardianship service and neighbouring local authority areas to ensure that best practice is provided.

In relation to clients who have no recourse to public funds, health and social care support is provided in line with immigration requirements around assessed health and care needs which are over and above the needs because of the physical effects, or anticipated physical effects of destitution. Staff supporting clients in this situation utilise the guidance and support of specialist agencies including the Scottish Refugee Council.
In relation to barriers, whilst to date West Dunbartonshire has not participated in the UK Governments’ Asylum seekers dispersal programme or in the unaccompanied asylum seeking children programme, it is currently participating in the Syrian refugee resettlement programme with the HSCP providing health and social care support locally. The challenges for local services to meet some of very specific needs of asylum seeking individuals has been recognised locally across community planning partners and acknowledged nationally. The highlighted concern is that national funding levels based on the Glasgow City experience of asylum dispersal is not adequate to provide effective services, with a specific additional difficulty about accessing competent legal services in non-urban council areas like West Dunbartonshire.

2. We’d also like to hear about how a person’s need for support is assessed and what would make this assessment process easier, please make reference to any policies and procedures within your organisation.

Assessments of individuals health and care support needs is undertaken using best practice approaches with individuals assessed for eligibility using the requirements of section 54 and schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. Families with children are assessed for support under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 section 22 whereby the HSCP has the authority to offer money or goods in kind to safeguard and promote the welfare of ‘children in need’. All vulnerable adults are assessed for community care needs under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 recognising the exclusions in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

3. If your area does not have experience of asylum seekers, it would be helpful to know what policies, guidance or procedures are in place or being developed to address support for asylum seekers

Policies and procedures which have been strengthened in relation to unaccompanied children and young people through public protection processes include the West Dunbartonshire Child Protection committee multi-agency child trafficking protocol and the West Dunbartonshire Child Sexual Exploitation strategy.
In relation to providing support to asylum seekers more generally, a similar approach to the local delivery of the Syrian refugee resettlement programme would be adopted using a combination of national and local expertise to deliver best practice by local services. The funding constraints highlighted above would need a resolution given the identified needs of the asylum seeking community.

Yours sincerely

R Keith Redpath
Chief Officer