

**Briefing to:** Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People working Group

**Briefing from:** Steve Martlew Interim Head of Communities

**Date:** 27 July 2021

**Subject:** 6 Monthly Asylum Procurement Report – 1/1/21 – 30/6/21

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## **Introduction**

The Housing & Support Services Overview & Scrutiny Working Group have requested that elected members have more input into the strategic planning, location and distribution of Housing and Support Services for vulnerable households.

One such vulnerable group are Asylum Seekers. Asylum Seekers are housed in dispersed accommodation whilst they await a decision as to their asylum application. Serco manage the procurement, management and housing support for all asylum seekers in the North West. Serco procure accommodation in local authority areas. This is usually in the form of a commercial agreement with a private landlord.

Each local authority operates an asylum seeker cluster limit which is based on 1 asylum seeker for every 200 head of population. This is set by the Home Office and applies across the UK. This cluster limit can only be used boroughwide and not at ward level. The cluster limit in terms of actual numbers of Asylum Seekers would be 1382. We currently have 241 dispersed Asylum Seekers in Sefton.

## **Procurement Process**

Serco's property procurement arm will approach the Local Authority with the property address and postcode of the property they wish to procure. This is known as a postcode check (PCC). The LA has 3 days to reply as to whether to grant approval for the procurement or not. The checks that the LA will make to determine whether a request can go ahead are:

- Crime, Hate Crime and Anti Social Behaviour levels – the Police are consulted
- Capacity with local GPs and Health Services for additional population – the CCG are consulted
- Capacity with local schools for additional pupils – Schools Regulatory Services are consulted.
- Concentration of Asylum Properties

## **6 Month PCC activity from 1/1/2021 – 30/6/21**

In the period 1/1/21 – 30/6/21 we received 85 requests for postcode checks.

Table 1 shows the total number of PCCs for the period by ward.

Properties designated as "Archived" are properties that Serco submit for a PCC but then notify us that they will no longer be pursuing the property.

Unknown status shows that once we receive a PCC we do not know the status of that request until such time as we receive an updated address list and see the property appear there. We are not notified by Serco as to the success or failure of the procurement exercise.

Table 1 – Postcode Checks received by Ward from 1/1/21-30/6/21

Ward	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Grand Total
<b>Archived</b>	<b>9</b>						<b>9</b>
Church	1						1
Derby	3						3
Litherland	1						1
Norwood	1						1
St Oswald	2						2
Victoria	1						1
<b>Unknown Status</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>76</b>
Church	1		4		2	3	10
Derby	5	3	7	3			18
Dukes			1			1	2
Ford			1	1		1	3
Kew	7			1			8
Linacre	2	2	2	1	2	4	13
Litherland		3	2	2	2	2	11
Netherton & Orrell			2				2
St Oswald	2		3		3	1	9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>85</b>

Table 2 shows the total number of PCC received since sefton became a dispersal area in 2016.

In summary we have received a total of 460 PCCs of which 263 were approved, 183 were refused and 7 withdrawn. Of the 263 approved application only 57 have gone onto become actual dispersed accommodation. The archived section contains any refused applications will form part o

Table 2 – Total Postcode checks received by ward from 1/1/2016

Ward	Active	Archived	Not Known	Re-submitted	Swapped	Withdrawn	Grand Total
Ainsdale		1					1
Blundellsands		11					11
Cambridge		1	11				12
Church	3	27	12			1	43
Derby	13	48	29			3	93
Dukes	1	6	5				12
Ford	3	23	4			1	31
Kew			8			1	9
Linacre	8	70	23		1		102
Litherland	11	24	16	3		1	55
Meols		2					2
Molyneux		1			1		2
Netherton & Orrell	3	5	3				11
Norwood		8					8
St Oswald	14	31	20				65
Victoria	1	2					3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>460</b>

Table 3 shows the decisions made on the 85 PCCs submitted by Serco from 1/1/21-30/6/21 by ward.

Of the 85 PCC submitted 49 were approved, 32 were refused and 4 were withdrawn by Serco.

Table 3 – Summary of decision made on PCCs by ward for the period 1/1/21-30/6/21

Ward	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Grand Total
<b>No</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>32</b>
Church	1						1
Derby	5	2	6	2			15
Ford			1	1			2
Linacre	2	1	2	1	1	4	11
Litherland		1					1
Netherton & Orrell			1				1
St Oswald	1						1
<b>Withdrawn</b>	<b>4</b>						<b>4</b>
Derby	3						3
Litherland	1						1
<b>Yes</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>49</b>
Church	1		4		2	3	10
Derby		1	1	1			3
Dukes			1			1	2
Ford						1	1
Kew	7			1			8
Linacre		1			1		2
Litherland		2	2	2	2	2	10
Netherton & Orrell			1				1
Norwood	1						1
St Oswald	3		3		3	1	10
Victoria	1						1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>85</b>

Table 4 provides more detail with regards to reasons for refusal in particular.

An example of when the category “Accepted – Pressures on External Services” would be used is where we would accept the PCC but ask that single males or females be housed there s there si pressure on school places and so wouldn’t suit a family.

Ward	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Grand Total
<b>Church</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>
Accepted			4		2	3	9
Accepted - Pressures on External Services	1						1
Failed - Hate Crime/Community Tension	1						1
<b>Derby</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>21</b>
Accepted				1			1
Accepted - Pressures on External Services		1	1				2
Failed - ASB	1	1					2
Failed - Hate Crime/Community Tension	4	1	6	2			13
Withdrawn	3						3

<b>Dukes</b>			<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Accepted			1			1	2
<b>Ford</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
Accepted						1	1
Failed - Hate Crime/Community Tension			1	1			2
<b>Kew</b>	<b>7</b>			<b>1</b>			<b>8</b>
Accepted	7			1			8
<b>Linacre</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>
Accepted					1		1
Accepted - Pressures on External Services		1					1
Failed - ASB					1	2	3
Failed - Hate Crime/Community Tension	2	1	2	1		2	8
<b>Litherland</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>
Accepted			1	2	2	2	7
Accepted - Pressures on External Services		2	1				3
Failed - ASB		1					1
Withdrawn	1						1
<b>Netherton &amp; Orrell</b>			<b>2</b>				<b>2</b>
Accepted			1				1
Failed - Hate Crime/Community Tension			1				1
<b>Norwood</b>	<b>1</b>						<b>1</b>
Accepted	1						1
<b>St Oswald</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
Accepted			2		3	1	6
Accepted - Pressures on External Services	3		1				4
Failed - Hate Crime/Community Tension	1						1
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>1</b>						<b>1</b>
Accepted - Pressures on External Services	1						1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>85</b>

### Conversion Rate

Members can see from the above tables that conversion rates of PCCs into actual dispersed accommodation is very low. Of the 460 total PCCs received since 1/1/2016 only 57 have progressed into actual dispersed accommodation – this around a 12% conversion rate.

In the period 1/1/21 to 30/6/21 only 2 additional properties became dispersed accommodation as the number of dispersed accommodation properties rose from 55 to 57.

### Forward Look - July to December 2021

#### Operation Oak

Operation Oak is a strategic approach by the Home Office towards procurement of asylum accommodation. This encourages the providers, in Seftons case Serco, to focus their procurement activity in the right areas. In support of this we have begun conversations with Serco via an initial meeting as to the areas of Sefton they should be focussing their procurement activity in. Table 4 will enable us to direct Serco to the areas they are more likely to get a positive decision and avoid wasted time and effort from all involved carrying out PCCs that we know are likely to be refused. We have yet to finalise these discussions but this will enable a more sensible, strategic view of the procurement of asylum accommodation.

## **Elected Members Input**

We recognise the intelligence and local knowledge Elected Members possess about the communities within their wards. We want to provide an opportunity for Elected Members to feed this intelligence and local knowledge as to the areas within their wards that maybe suffering issues that should be taken into account when considering future procurement. As described earlier any refusal will need to be evidence based, so it is vital that Elected Members report instances of Crime, including Hate Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and any Community Tensions into the right channels so that the evidence we use to make informed decisions is accurate and reflective of the situation.

Steve Martlew  
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16 July 2021