

Wendy Milne
Exeter City of Sanctuary
c/o CoLab
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Dear Wendy Milne,

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Thank you for your letter of 29th September concerning Devon's response to taking care of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, particularly since the start of the National Transfer Scheme in July. I reported on this matter to the meeting of our full Council on Thursday 6th October. I attach a copy of that report which I hope will answer most of the questions raised in your letter. I believe that it makes clear our intentions and commitments. It also explains our understanding on the government's approach to its commitments to resettle children from the MENA region and in Europe.

The government asked local authorities to participate in the National Transfer Scheme in regional groups. As the Chair of South West Councils I am pleased to say that our region was one of the first to join the National Transfer Scheme. Councils in our region, including Devon, are collaborating to take care of children referred to us under the National Transfer Scheme. Devon is already looking after children referred to us under the scheme, in addition to a number of unaccompanied children already in our care. I do not however believe that it is appropriate to comment on the numbers or locations of children in our care at any one time.

You are correct that Devon's Children's Social Work Service is leading on caring for unaccompanied children. These children are taken into the Council's care. They have complex and diverse needs and our responsibilities to them are the same as they are to any child in our care. There are a number of additional factors that can affect their care, including risks to their safety from traffickers or others who they may have encountered on their journeys. I am very grateful for City of Sanctuary's willingness to help support these children but we must tread carefully. As we are seeking to increase our pool of foster carers, your members may wish to consider becoming carers (subject to the required checks and assessment processes) and, if so, you can contact our Fostering Service. There are full details about how to contact the service on the website <https://www.fosteringindevon.org.uk>.