



The RT Hon Brandon Lewis MP
Minister of State for Immigration
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Dear Brandon Lewis

Re: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) - Section 67 Immigration Act

We are writing to you to express our deep concern about the Government's apparent lack of commitment to accommodating vulnerable unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) under Section 67 of the Immigration Act '16 (aka the 'Dubs Amendment'). We ask that you make immediate concrete arrangements with your counterparts in France, Greece and Italy to commence the transfer of those remaining unaccompanied children that you and the Home Office agreed to bring to safety here last February/March (280 UASCs are still due to be transferred). We understand there has not been a single lone child asylum seeker brought to the UK under Section 67 this year and only approx. two hundred last year. We believe the minister must be aware of the widespread public concern and condemnation of this sad state of affairs and urge you to take action now to honour these commitments.

The decision early this year to effectively close the scheme and cap the total numbers of children to be transferred from camps in EU countries under the 'Dubs Amendment' at just 480 was extremely disturbing in itself. It shut the door on nearly 3,000 unaccompanied children living in limbo and without protection in EU countries that are struggling to cope with the numbers of refugee arrivals. However the additional failure of your Department since then to transfer any of the remaining agreed 280 UASCs this year suggests almost a callous disregard for the tragic circumstances of these children's lives. We understand that LA places over and beyond this number are available nationally. Our own local authority, Devon, has positively stepped forward and offered to accommodate vulnerable children and young people resettled through 'Dubs'. South West local authorities have offered 130 places. Why then has there been so little progress given the relatively small numbers involved?

Please could you explain and outline for us:

- The specific reasons why no UASCs have been transferred to the UK from the EU since February '17 under Section 67?
- What concrete plans you have, or intend to, put in place with your counterparts in Greece, Italy and France to secure the urgent safe transfer of the further 280 lone children you have committed to accept?
- When can we expect to see further unaccompanied children and young people brought to safety here from the EU under the 'Dubs' scheme?
- Whether you plan in the future to re-consult with LAs nationally as to their available places for UASCs transferred under Section 67? If not what are the reasons for this?

We would appreciate your response to our questions above which relate specifically to the 'Dubs Amendment' scheme only. We have read your statement of 20th July and heard your replies to MPs Yvette Cooper and Tim Farron's recent questioning of your plans in

Parliament regarding this transfer scheme. We did think your responses at the time were short on details and so would welcome further clarification.

We are fully aware of the other Government transfer schemes including SVPR, Vulnerable Children Resettlement (MENA) and NTS for unaccompanied minors – as well as the numbers of individuals and families brought to the UK under these schemes. We are not seeking information on these. Our concern here is with those most vulnerable unaccompanied children currently seeking asylum within ‘safe’ Europe and who are ineligible for other transfer schemes. Our concern is shared by many, including the National City of Sanctuary extensive network of organisations and people, which Exeter City of Sanctuary is part of.

We do not believe that a moral, compassionate and legally required response by the UK Government towards the most ‘at risk’ young refugees in the EU acts as a ‘pull factor’ for traffickers and perilous journeys. Rather evidence suggests that the closing down of safe transfer and passage routes leads to neglect, tragic and fatal outcomes, and more/other perilous journeys. This strengthens the role of traffickers.

We urge you therefore to show compassion and strong leadership by speedily arranging for the safe transfer of the remaining UASC you committed to bring to safety here under Section 67. We further suggest that you re-consult with LAs as to their available capacity and inform Parliament of the outcome. Such actions would we believe be admired and draw respect from the general public, NGOs and concerned public servants alike.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely

Wendy Milne (Secretary, Exeter City of Sanctuary)

On behalf of ExCoS Campaigns Group

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[cc: Ben Bradshaw MP](#), Office of Ben Bradshaw MP, House of Commons London, SW1A 0AA

Exeter City of Sanctuary is working to create a culture of welcome and safety for refugees and asylum seekers in Exeter.

