

Cllr. Hart,  
Chairman, Devon County Council's Cabinet  
County Hall  
Topsham Road  
Exeter  
Devon EX2 4QD

31/10/16

Dear Cllr. Hart

Re: Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Thank you for your letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> October outlining Devon's current commitments to caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

We, along with our supporters, were extremely pleased to hear that Devon aims to be able to look after at least 25 unaccompanied children and young people by the end of March '17, under the National Transfer Scheme. This is very welcome news, particularly as we are aware that some Councils have not yet agreed to participate in caring for UASC. We hope that after March '17 Devon will continue to be able to accept further unaccompanied children under the NTS.

Separate to this commitment we see that Devon in addition has been host to a temporary Home Office respite facility for vulnerable young refugees arriving from Calais. We do realise that this is emergency accommodation only for up to 70 young people, who will then be moved to other parts of UK to reunite with family members or to be accommodated elsewhere. We are not surprised by the welcoming and generous response of the local community to these children as we have seen this same heartfelt goodwill mirrored among organisations, community groups and individuals in Exeter. We hope that Council members are encouraged to continue their commitment to UASC.

We are aware that that DCC has legal responsibility for the care of any UASC accommodated by them and that any arrangements for their care, as well as the meeting of their complex ongoing needs, rests with specialist professionals and assessed carers. Exeter City of Sanctuary understands this as some of our members have worked professionally in this area. Consequently we are not seeking direct involvement or contact with these young people but to support your efforts in a broader way including, as you mention in your letter, raising awareness among our supporters and networks of DCC's need to increase their pool of foster carers. We are very happy to do so and will be encouraging people interested in becoming foster carers or host families to contact your Fostering Service and also liaising with them.

Media coverage continues to highlight the ongoing tragic circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees internationally, including the 1,500 UASC currently stranded in the container site at Calais still without a political resolution. We do understand political solutions are needed at National and International levels to address this, but are heartened that Devon is playing a role in offering sanctuary to some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

We wish you well with the complex work of caring for these young people. Please let us know if there are any further ways we can support you.

Signed: Wendy Milne on behalf of Exeter City of Sanctuary Campaigns Group