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Monday 7 June 2021

Dear colleagues,

URGENT NATIONAL SUPPORT TO UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

Firstly, a thank you to all those who are working tirelessly to ensure that the approximately 3,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) enter the United Kingdom are cared for. However, some local authorities are receiving a disproportionate number of UASC in their areas and, as we enter the summer months, we are already seeing increasing pressures from growing numbers of UASC arriving on small boats on the south coast. There is a lot of ongoing work to reduce these crossings that put lives at risk. In the meantime, the Home Office and Department for Education are doing all that we can to support those local authorities such as Kent and Croydon that receive large numbers of new arrivals and ensure that these young people are properly cared for. We are therefore writing to you to ask that you consider if there is more that your local authority can do to help.

As you will know the National Transfer Scheme for UASC has not worked as effectively as we had envisaged. Following a consultation last year our two departments are working together to establish a reformed National Transfer Scheme as soon as possible. The transformation package will address many of the barriers identified through the consultation and we hope will lead to a more equitable and sustainable solution. We hope an announcement on that will be made within the next few weeks.

Over the last year many local authorities have already responded to calls for support with care for UASC with more than 600 UASC having transferred to 112 different authorities across the UK. We know too, that many local authorities continue to support high numbers of unaccompanied children, both those who arrive spontaneously and those they have taken through the National Transfer Scheme. We also appreciate that many authorities provide support for the wider asylum population, refugees being resettled to the UK and are also now considering what support they can offer for Afghans being transferred to the UK. We are very grateful for this.

While the reformed National Transfer Scheme is being finalised and put in place, we need to do what we can to help alleviate current pressures and are therefore asking whether you are able to provide support to these young people now. It only needs each authority across the UK to assume

statutory responsibility for a small number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children over the course of a year. If every local authority could commit to assuming statutory responsibility for a small number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with immediate effect, then we would very rapidly secure a more equitable distribution of UASC across the UK.

Last week we visited one of the reception centres in Kent housing many young people who have arrived recently. We had the privilege of spending some time talking to them and know that whilst working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children can be challenging it can also be extremely rewarding. We know that there is a great deal of expertise among local authorities in how to support these young people. We are happy to help make connections between local authorities if those less familiar with this work feel they would benefit from an opportunity to learn from the considerable experience of others.

We urgently need a pipeline of offers of placements and, as above, the number we need from each local authority is incredibly small. We can also confirm that any local authority assuming responsibility for a transferring UASC as part of this request will receive funding at the higher rate of £143 per young person per night. Separately around 200 available placements have been identified across the UK, and our teams would be happy to discuss with you whether and how any of those places might be secured for UASC arrivals.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you find it helpful to have further information or would welcome a discussion with one of our team. Please contact UASCNationalTransferTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk with details of what you are able to provide either immediately or over the coming weeks.

Finally, we will, of course, share information on reforms to the National Transfer Scheme at the earliest opportunity and look forward to working with you to ensure that this provides a sustainable way of supporting UASC in the longer-term.

With very many thanks for your help and support.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Haddad
Director General, Asylum and Protection



Indra Morris
Director General, Social Care, Mobility
and Disadvantage