

# Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

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# Norfolk's journey of improvement

- ▶ Norfolk has had a difficult journey with Ofsted, previously in intervention
- ▶ High LAC numbers, inconsistent practice, resource and staffing challenges
- ▶ Support of Partners in Practice
- ▶ New leadership - permanent with great vision
- ▶ Long journey - first inadequate in 2013, moved to RI to be Good 2017
- ▶ Culture of innovation and creative practice
- ▶ Focus on aspirational outcomes for all children and young people, but particularly those we have looked after
- ▶ Robust improvement trajectory allowed Norfolk to reengage with National Transfer Scheme

# Norfolk's response to National Transfer Scheme

- ▶ Work with Eastern Region National Transfer Scheme and close working relationship with Strategic Migration Partnership
- ▶ Rota has worked well, it is fair and balances operational needs of LAs and need to support colleagues over quota
- ▶ Rota enabled Norfolk to begin to build work around UASC again as the situation in Norfolk improved
- ▶ Member support for rota as seen to be fair and supportive to LAs engaged
- ▶ Recognises the impact of spontaneous arrivals, pressing operational challenges and the needs of each LA within the Eastern Region
- ▶ SMP offers good support, advice and guidance

# Norfolk's response to UASC

- ▶ Initially had cohort of UASC approx. 35-45 in county but spread across 6 localities
- ▶ Have built a specialist team to provide creative, innovative practice and consistency
- ▶ Initially 3 workers and a part time business support
- ▶ Now large team including Peer Support worker, Personal Advisors, Social Workers
- ▶ Worked with SMP and Home Office to slowly build cohort (quota 117 under 18s) during 2019 - increase from 45 to 145 to date
- ▶ We accepted UASC through a number of different routes, NTS, spontaneous arrivals, Dubs, Dublin III, VCRS

# How we meet the needs of UASC in Norfolk

- ▶ Ring fenced accommodation through tendering process, affordable accommodation for all UASC aged 16 and over except those with the most complex needs
- ▶ Work with Housing Association to rent flats with in-house support provided for those over 18 awaiting HO decision to ensure affordability and to free up accommodation for new UASC coming in
- ▶ Work with other SIA providers, in-house fostering service and IFAs to meet recent significant increase in demand and to support younger children
- ▶ We have built a network of professionals and agencies who meet monthly
- ▶ Close working relationship with Health colleagues, Virtual School and others

# Challenges and solutions

- ▶ Clear expectation that Norfolk young people live in Norfolk
- ▶ Diversity and cultural needs - creative work with the community and with the network around the UASC cohort to meet need
- ▶ Religious needs - work with religious leaders, plans regarding travel
- ▶ ESOL - how to meet language and learning needs
- ▶ College availability - Partnership working with Virtual School
- ▶ Partnership working with Independent Reviewing Service
- ▶ Health needs - close working relationship with LAC Named Nurse and Senior commissioners
- ▶ Legal needs - close working relationship with key law firms

# Recent national picture

- ▶ When we first received the request to support with the South East and particularly Kent, we did what we could to identify placements and ensure we had Social Work capacity - Pledge made to take 20 yp over August and Sept (10 at the end of each month)
- ▶ When things became more challenging for Kent CC timetable moved up to take August cohort - 11 moved to Norfolk by mid-August
- ▶ Further request for support - pledge to take 25 in cohorts of 12 and 13
- ▶ Actually took 8 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept, a further 22 on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept and then a further 6 a couple of weeks later - total from Kent August/Sept - 47 young people
- ▶ We have been able to assess their needs and complete their Health and Education planning, they are settled and beginning their studies now, it has been a huge effort by the whole network

# Final thoughts

- ▶ Other elements that have helped:
  - ▶ Working with other LAs when setting out is beneficial
  - ▶ Sometimes the small things really matter eg. sleep packs
  - ▶ Group work with UASC is key in meeting need effectively
- ▶ Relationships matter - to secure 'buy in' and support:
  - ▶ With Members and CEOs where not unitary
  - ▶ With partner agencies
  - ▶ With the young people themselves