

## **Charity's latest recruit shares the importance of support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Greater Manchester**

Eleanor Reardon is one of Greater Manchester Youth Network's recent recruits, leading a new programme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Greater Manchester.

Eleanor was previously based in London, having moved there for work but grew up in Stockport, Greater Manchester. With a career starting in pastoral work in a school, Eleanor was introduced to the power of youth work and went on to specialise in that.

“My first job in London was working for a homelessness charity where I ran an accommodation project for homeless young people. I saw first hand how difficult it is to get accommodation in London, with my colleagues also noticing how the young people we helped had no connection to where they were first placed when they came to the UK. It was sad to see that these places and their communities didn't resonate with them, and that they felt that at 18 they needed to move to London in hope of finding a better community.

“However, this often was not as simple and easy as the young people thought, and we found we were always oversubscribed trying to help the constant flow of refugees coming to our doorstep. It was a valuable experience working with so many refugees where I learned about their experiences and cultures and understood how important support for them is.”

Eleanor moved on to work for the Refugee Council, where she helped asylum-seeking and refugee children with English lessons and basic life skills. However, Eleanor had envisioned moving back to Greater Manchester as she wanted to help young people feel settled and welcome in their first homes, without feeling a need to uproot to London if they didn't need to.

“Seeing the disconnect that many young people had with the areas they had been placed in was one of the reasons why I wanted to move back to Manchester. I wanted to work somewhere that would potentially stop young people from feeling like they had no option but to move to London. I'm hoping we can help create a community for young people and help them to build a life and create connections in the boroughs of Greater Manchester they have been placed in.”

Eleanor is excited to be working with young people face to face, after doing a lot of online work and supporting people across the country, she is looking forward to meeting and working with young people in person to build up regular contact and connections with them.

Over the next three years GMYN will be supporting 240 unaccompanied children who live in the 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester.

“The new programme we are running at GMYN will combine a mix of group sessions with young people, including sports, arts and craft, music and life skill sessions. We will run regular group sessions where the young people can socialise and get comfortable with GMYN's youth workers.

“We will also be running one on one provisions for young people who need the most support. We can signpost the young people to other service providers if they need further help as well.

“There is lots of scope for the young people who join this specific programme to attend other programme sessions too, mixing with other young people across Greater Manchester. We want our young people to be able to take part in all opportunities and events, which also helps those who have lived in Manchester their whole lives to learn about the experiences of others they may not have come across before.”

The programme is partnering with Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, which is providing legal support for any young people who need that. They will be able to provide young people with focused legal representation and brief them on issues that they may need help with.

*For more information about the Greater Manchester-based youth charity, please see their website [here](#).*