

News and Updates

Image

WYR loudspeaker icon

For the latest news stories on migration, please visit the [news section of our website](#). For the stories relating specifically to UASC from the last 6 months, please see below.

10 June 2024

- The [High Court passed down its final judgement regarding a legal challenge against the Home Office and Kent County Council](#) which last year ruled that a cap placed on the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children the council supports and the routine use of hotel accommodation for this group were both unlawful practices. The High Court has ended its supervision over the two parties but reiterates that [the Council must continue to comply with its duties to support children under the Children Act](#). (Sources: Doughty Street Chambers, Local Government Lawyer)

4 June 2024

- The [Supreme Court has ruled that safeguarding duties under the Children Act 1989 apply to children on the island of Diego Garcia](#). A group of Sri Lankan asylum seekers including families with children have been held on the island for up to two and half years. Litigation is ongoing regarding the case. (Source: Free Movement)

20 May 2024

- [Lord Alf Dubs urged government to remove barriers to children joining relatives in the UK and to amend rules to allow refugee children in the UK to sponsor parents and siblings](#). He argues that the UK's refugee policy is 'delivering vulnerable children into the hands of people smugglers.' (Source: the Guardian)
- [Charity Humans for Rights Network has threatened the Home Office with legal action over the risk of unaccompanied children potentially being sent to Rwanda whilst awaiting the result of age assessment](#). (Source: the Guardian)
- [A report from Young Roots and the Helen Bamber Foundation highlights how stressful and re-traumatising the age assessment process can be for young people seeking asylum and suggests ways to improve the process](#). (Source: Young Roots)

13 May 2024

- NGOs and charities have expressed concern after it was revealed that over 350 lone children were held temporarily in UK-run detention centres in France between January 2022 and October 2023. A number of charities have called for systematic reform of the support for children identified as possible victims of trafficking or modern slavery, following revelations that in 2022 1,871 children fell out of the National Referral Mechanism when they turned 18. (Source: the Guardian).

7 May 2024

- Refugee Council reported that unaccompanied children that seek asylum have been wrongly issued notices of intent for Rwanda. Meanwhile, the HM chief inspector of prisons reports that several UK airports are struggling to cope with immigration demands. Between June and November 2023, 149 unaccompanied children were held for an average of 6.5 hours at Luton airport, with 20 being held for up to 12 hours. (Sources: the Guardian, The Independent)

29 April 2024

- Three young people seeking asylum travelled from Sheffield to Parliament this week, to raise awareness of the risks to young people who are age disputed on arrival in the UK. They met with Andrew Western MP, who later raised the issue in the House of Commons. (Source: Refugee Council)

8 April 2024

- Due to being close to capacity to care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the leader of Kent County Council called on the Home Office to enact sections of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 which would enable the Home Office to accommodate unaccompanied children themselves. Meanwhile in a recent report, the Children's Commissioner for England criticised the Illegal Migration Act in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, raising concerns around plans to use scientific age assessment, removal of unaccompanied children when they turn 18, use of inappropriate accommodation and lack of safeguarding. (Sources: Community Care, Children's Commissioner)

2 April 2024

- In Leeds, concerns have been raised regarding a number of referrals made to children's services for children being accommodated in adult asylum accommodation. (Source: Leeds Live)
- The High Court has heard evidence from Kent County Council that due to arrival numbers on small boats and delays in moving children through the National Transfer Scheme, capacity for UASC placements within Kent may run out before the end of March. (Source: the Guardian).
- The Children's Commissioner has raised concerns that 'insufficient long-term solutions' have been identified to house and support unaccompanied minors on arrival in the UK.

(Source: Children's Commissioner)

25 March 2024

- Lord Alf Dubs highlighted the risk of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children being sent to Rwanda, if changes are not made to the bill. Based on the current Rwanda bill, if a young person claims to be under 18 but two immigration officials think they are an adult at first sight, they will be processed as adults without a social worker age assessment. (Source: inews)

18 March 2024

- The children's commissioner has criticised reported Home Office plans to use shipping containers to house unaccompanied children infected with diphtheria. (Source: The Times)

4 March 2024

- New good practice guidance on supporting unaccompanied children who are at risk of going missing cites fear of immigration procedures plus lack of support upon turning 18, as contributors to missing episodes. (Source: Missing People)
- In the recently published inspection report into the use of hotels to house unaccompanied children seeking asylum, staff were found to have played 'games' with children asking them to guess who would be allocated a foster placement next. The treatment was described as 'insensitive' and 'upsetting' to children. There was also no evidence that staff working in hotels had been given regular DBS clearance. (Source: the Guardian)

26 February 2024

- ECPAT UK raised concerns around the sacking of Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, David Neal, at a time when 15 inspection reports remain unpublished. This includes a second report on accommodating unaccompanied children in Home Office run hotels, as well as an inspection of the immigration system as it relates to the social care sector. (Source: ECPAT UK)
- ECPAT UK also recently released a report alongside University of Nottingham Rights Lab which highlighted insecure immigration status as a key risk factor increasing vulnerability to exploitation amongst children and young people. The report warns that legislation such as the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and Illegal Migration Act 2023 may further increase risks to vulnerable young people and prevent victims from coming forward due to fear of removal. (Source: ECPAT UK)

5 February 2024

- A Freedom of Information request revealed that over 170 people, including 15 unaccompanied children, had to be moved out of a former RAF site used as asylum accommodation as it was not appropriate for them. Meanwhile, the Office for National

Statistics (ONS) published a report on the experiences of displaced children, notably finding that unstable accommodation placements and the use of hotel accommodation removed a sense of agency for young people. (Sources: BBC, ONS)

29 January 2024

- A new report highlights that at least 1,300 children were incorrectly classified as adults by the Home Office during an 18-month period. Many of these young people were placed in adult asylum hotels and 14 children spent time in adult prisons, sharing cells with adult males. (Source: Refugee Council)

22 January 2024

- Kent County Council are reviewing multiple sites for use as temporary reception centres for recently arrived unaccompanied children seeking asylum. (Source: Kent)
- Several UK councils such as Dorset, Hertfordshire, Bath and North East Somerset highlighted the lack of sufficient funding to support caring for unaccompanied children. (Sources: Dorset Echo, East Anglia Bylines, Midsomer Norton).
- Finally, this briefing looks at local authority duties to support children under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. (Source: Free Movement).

15 January 2024

- On children and young people, the use of scientific age assessment has now become law. The Home Office will now be able to use teeth and bone X-rays as part of the age assessment process, with those who refuse potentially being penalised. The British Dental Association has criticised the use of X-rays to determine age due to their inaccuracy. (Sources: Free Movement, inews)

2 January 2024

- A High Court judge has ruled that a former child refugee who was a victim of trafficking had been failed, after receiving no specialist support from either his local council or the Home Office. (Source: ECPAT UK)
- Work has begun on a temporary home for unaccompanied children in Kent. The building is a former care home and it is hoped that it will help Kent County Council to manage their high number of arrivals. (Source: Kent Online)
- The Children's Commissioner has written to thank children's social care teams in local authorities for 'their dedication to ensuring the vulnerable children's voices are heard'. (Source: Children's Commissioner)

Contact for UASC hub

Your contact for Yorkshire and Humber is:

Delphine Jacobs - UASC Regional Coordinator

wyr@migrationyorkshire.org.uk

0113 535 0119

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