

# 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.

## 30 July 2024

- A [refugee from Syria initially deemed to be aged 28 by the Home Office, was later found to be just 17](#) (this builds on [previous reports that hundreds of unaccompanied asylum seeking children have been wrongly placed in adult accommodation or detention](#), putting them at risk). (Sources: The National, Refugee Council)

## 22 July 2024

- A [report released this week found that placing lone asylum-seeking children in Home Office child hotels in Kent increased the risk of exploitation and trafficking](#). The report maintains that of the 440 unaccompanied children who went missing from these settings between 2021 and 2024, over a hundred are still unaccounted for. Relatedly, [the Children's Commissioner for England visited Kent](#) and communicated their concerns to the Home Office and the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. (Sources: University College London, The Children's Commissioner)

## 15 July 2024

- [United Nations special rapporteurs warned that the UK government is at risk of breaching international law due to wrongly classifying unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as adults](#).
- [The Children's Commissioner for England has raised concerns over the treatment of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and families at the Manston Home Office holding facility](#).

- ECPAT UK has published their key priorities for the new UK government to combat child trafficking. One key priority is to align immigration functions with child protection. (Sources: Independent, the Guardian, ECPAT UK)

## **8 July 2024**

- Refugee Council highlighted that the UK accepts just 0.1% of forcibly displaced children globally. The charity outlines current key issues impacting unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the UK and makes recommendations for how to protect the rights of these young people. (Source: Refugee Council)
- This research-informed policy report explores how young refugees experience the education system in England. Key issues found to be impacting young people include asylum policies, the dispersal model, temporary and inadequate housing, lack of access to internet and technology and language barriers. The report also comes in zine format. (Source: Bristol University)

## **1 July 2024**

- A project backed by the Salvation has enabled Ukrainian refugee children living in Scarborough to access lessons in their native language on Ukrainian heritage. Meanwhile, a school in Essex says the International Rescue Committee (IRC) healing classrooms programme has improved their support for refugee children, after they introduced trauma-informed teaching and increasing cultural awareness. (Sources: BBC News, the Guardian)

## **25 June 2024**

- Local residents in Kent protested outside a site planned to accommodate unaccompanied asylum seeking children aged under 16. Kent County Council recently published figures stating that 772 unaccompanied children arrived during for the first five months of 2024. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian)

## **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)

## **Contact for UASC hub**

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