

CHILD SAFEGUARDING UPDATE (4)

This update provides a summary of various child safeguarding activity recently or currently undertaken across the Home Office that relates to migration, borders, and citizenship.

This may include, for example, information on new legislation, strategies and polices, or specific initiatives undertaken by our operational directorates - Border Force, Her Majesty's Passport Office, Immigration Enforcement, and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

In collaboration with respective policy and operational leads, this update has been produced by Safeguarding Advice and Children's Champion (SACC) - a Home Office team, led by 2 professional social work advisers, responsible for ensuring the department meets its statutory child safeguarding duty under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act. SACC also oversees the Home Office relationship with local safeguarding partnerships on matters relating to migration, borders, and citizenship.

Notifying the Home Office about a child safeguarding practice review

The UK wide nature in which the Home Office operates means that a rapid review or a child safeguarding practice review could relate to interactions with a child by any 1 or more of our above operational directorates.

We have, therefore, established a central departmental contact point for all new and existing reviews, so please notify Immigration Enforcement's National Command and Control Unit (NCCU) of any review you believe requires a migration, border or citizenship related contribution from the Home Office. This will help to ensure the review is promptly directed to the appropriate business areas.

NCCU can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 03000 134 999 or CommandandControlUnit@homeoffice.gov.uk. It is also available to facilitate any wider migration, borders, or citizenship related queries you have or information you wish to share.

Border Force support for Ukrainian arrivals

Border Force has published a national safeguarding action plan (Operation WIREBRICK) for responding to displaced Ukrainian arrivals.

A checks and 'triaging' process has also been established for the Border Force part of the information chain between local authorities, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Border Force National Intelligence Hub, and UKVI. Almost immediately, this enabled a border intervention to safeguard a vulnerable Ukrainian who would otherwise have been joining a serial sex offender under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Border Force National Intelligence Hub has reported 15 safeguarding cases since.

National Transfer Scheme

The high intake of young people seen since last year, particularly because of small boat crossings, has resulted in an increase to the overall Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) population. This has placed the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) under significant pressure, with children continuing to be accommodated in hotels while places in local authorities are pursued.

As a result, the Home Office has notified all UK local authorities with children's services of the following necessary operational changes to the NTS:

- To ensure transfers are concluded efficiently and UASC in hotels are placed in local authority care at the earliest opportunity, the 10-day transfer deadline has been reduced to 5 working days for all transfers of UASC not currently in the care of a local authority. The transfer target remains 10 working days for NTS transfers between local authorities.
- The operating threshold above which a local authority is no longer expected to receive UASC under the NTS has been increased from 0.07% to 0.1% of a local authority's general child population. Referrals for transfer are now allocated to local authorities between the 0.07% and 0.1% level and these authorities can no longer refer new arrivals for transfer.
- To support local authorities in moving these children into longer term placements quickly and safely, local authorities receive an additional £2,000 per month for each child who is transferred from a hotel within 5 working days to local authority care. This additional funding is provided for 3 months. This is in addition to the higher rate funding contribution of £143 per child per night for each UASC supported by local authorities that are supporting UASC at or above 0.07% of their general child population at 31 March 2022.

Contacting SACC

Please don't hesitate to contact SACC at ChildrensChampion@homeoffice.gov.uk if you would like to learn more about the information included in this update.