

Re: The rights of children

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as organisations and charities on the frontline of supporting children in the UK, to raise our concerns about a sustained attack on children's rights emerging from recent migration policy.

The Government has committed to undertake a Child Rights Impact Assessment of its proposals in 'Restoring Order and Control' and 'A Fairer Pathway to Settlement'. However, proposals are already being implemented and this assessment has not been published. We are deeply concerned that proposed radical overhauls of the immigration system and routes to settlement, as well as drastic changes to the asylum system, family returns and asylum support provision, will threaten the safety and security of hundreds of thousands of children, babies and young people in the UK.

Not only do these asylum and immigration reforms disregard children's rights. They also impede the Government's ambitions to reduce child poverty, raise the healthiest generation, tackle educational inequalities and ensure 75% of children reach a Good Level of Development when they start school. In Scotland, these proposals risk undermining the Scottish Government's statutory child poverty targets and duties under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

Among the measures that threaten the psychological safety, health and life chances of children in the UK are:

- **Earned settlement:** placing over 300,000 children already in the UK on 10, 15 or even 30 year routes to settlement will throw the lives of families who've made decisions about their children's education and futures into chaos, while economic analysis shows up to 90,000 children will be trapped in poverty by these plans.
- **Family returns consultation:** removing support from families refused asylum and increasing family returns - including enforced returns using child detention - risks harming children and leaving families destitute. Meanwhile stripping away Children Act 1989 safeguards will reduce the support available to destitute families in England - leaving children facing homelessness.
- **Leaving care support:** the family returns consultation also proposes to cut off leaving care support in England from appeal rights exhausted young people who have claimed asylum and penalising any care leaver whose local authority has failed to support them to resolve their immigration status. Attempting to remove a group of care leavers from landmark Children Act 1989 protections designed to safeguard and protect all children is a dereliction of what we owe to young people in the care of the state, calling into question the Government commitment to creating a clear pathway for children in care.
- **Use of force:** plans to handcuff and physically handle children in circumstances such as 'a parent refusing to release a child's hand' risk causing distress, trauma and lasting emotional damage to children. To describe such harm to children as 'unfortunate but necessary and justified' is abhorrent.

- **Refugee children:** whilst many of these measures put all migrant children at risk, there are particular threats for refugee children, who already have the lowest educational outcomes of any group of children, and have now seen the safe route of family reunion suspended, face the constant uncertainty of 30-month temporary protection, and have no clarity on how they might be included in more secure work- and-study routes.
- **Language:** It is reprehensible to suggest, without evidence, that children's lives are being risked for the 'personal benefit' of their parents or others. When addressing any instances of child exploitation, policy must be grounded in fact.

This Government's Opportunity Mission is about breaking down barriers for children, not creating more. The Child Poverty Strategy makes a vital commitment to lifting 550,000 children out of poverty by 2030, as well as a specific commitment to ensuring vulnerable migrant children receive the support that they require, regardless of their immigration status. Yet for migrant and refugee children, babies and care leavers, these plans risk entrenching the very poverty you are rightly seeking to eliminate.

We urge you to change course, and create policy that reflects simple facts we all know to be true. Children who grow up here belong here. Children need stability and certainty to thrive. Care leavers deserve love, special care and a clear path to a future. And we must do everything in our power to prevent children from experiencing homelessness, distress and trauma.

We urge you to put the welfare and rights of children at the heart of asylum and migration policy.

Yours,

British Association of Social Workers
 Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
 4in10 London's Child Poverty Network
 Social Workers Union
 National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, Catch22
 Birth Companions
 Anti Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU)
 The Hummingbird Refugee Project
 Young Roots
 Youth Legal & Resource Centre
 Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)
 Reunite Families UK
 HIAS+JCORE
 Safe Passage International
 Just for Kids Law, including Children's Rights Alliance for England
 Project 17

The Separated Child Foundation
 TACT Fostering
 Woodcraft Folk
 Creative Youth Network
 ECPAT UK
 Children's Law Centre
 Become
 PAFRAS
 The For Baby's Sake Trust
 The Fostering Network
 National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)
 Children in Wales - Plant yng Nghymru
 Project Play
 Da'aro Youth Project
 Social Workers Without Borders
 Humans For Rights Network
 City of Sanctuary UK
 Leicester Mamas
 Together with Migrant Children
 Croeso Menai
 Our Second Home

West London Welcome
Care4Calais
Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees
ACH
Reset Communities for Refugees
Joint Council for the Welfare of
Immigrants
Refugee and Migrant Justice
Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support
(DCRS)
The Unity Project
The Enthum Foundation
Refugee Action
JustRight Scotland
Migration Justice at Law Centre NI
Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit
Baca
Revive
Swansea Asylum Seekers Support
Citizens Advice North Staffordshire
Wakefield District City of Sanctuary
Bail for Immigration Detainees
Welsh Refugee Council
Six Ways Baptist Church
Oasis
Big Leaf Foundation
Knighton and District Refugee Support
Group
Swansea Asylum Seekers Support
(SASS)
Refugee Support Devon
The United Reformed Church, Manchester
& Salford
Praxis
BRISTOL REFUGEE RIGHTS
CARAS
The Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in
Exile
Lifeline Options CIC
Stockport Refugee Support Group
Islington Law Centre
Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit
(MiCLU)
Young Outspoken Survivors
South London Refugee Association
Race Equality First
Global Link (Lancaster)
Settle

Bristol Sanctuary Theatre
Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN)
Caritas Salford
Stafford Welcomes Refugees
Southampton Action
No More Exclusions
Father Hudson's Caritas
Preston City of Sanctuary
European Network on Statelessness
Rainbow Haven
Suffolk Refugee Support
Lancaster & Morecambe City of Sanctuary
Snowdrop Project
Music Action International
GARAS (Gloucestershire Action for
Refugees and Asylum Seekers)
Sanctuary in Chichester
Cardinal Hume Centre
Asylum Aid
Psychologists for Social Change Leicester
Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network
Freedom from Torture
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee
Forum
Latin American Women's Rights Service
(LAWRS)
Manchester Refugee Support Network
Migrant Democracy Project
Development Education in Dorset (DEED)
Merseyside Solidarity Knows No Borders
Greater Manchester Fairtrade Network
Street Talk
Doncaster Conservation Club
Citizens Advice Newcastle
End Deportations Belfast
Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network -
QARN
The Race Equality Centre
Scotswood Garden
The Eagles Wing, Bury
WILPF UK Scottish Branch
Refugee Support Europe
Hay, Brecon and Talgarth Sanctuary for
refugees
Manchester Community Central
Hope Projects
Manchester Amnesty International Group
Bristol Hospitality Network

Boaz Trust
Catholics for AIDS Prevention & Support
(CAPS) C.I.O.
Institute of Our Lady of Mercy
Harmony Choir Leeds
Salford CVS
Asylum Support Appeals Project
South Yorkshire Refugee Law & Justice
Detention Action
We Are Survivors
Asylum Matters
Art Refuge
Asylum Link Merseyside
Manchester City of Sanctuary
Bevan Foundation

Helen Bamber Foundation
South East and East Asian Women's
Association SEEAWA
Greater Manchester Migrant Destitution
Fund
Medical Justice
Caritas Diocese of Plymouth
Conversation Over Borders
Salisbury World Refugee Centre
Restore, a project of Birmingham
Churches Together
CSAN - Caritas Social Action Network
The Migrant English Project
Oasis Church, Inner Birmingham
Asylum Justice