

Debate Pack

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By Melanie Gower,
David Foster,
Lulu Meade,
Maria Lalic
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Accommodation of asylum-seeking children in hotels

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Summary

There will be a Westminster Hall debate on the accommodation of asylum-seeking children in hotels on 7 June 2023, led by Deidre Brock MP.

Local authorities' safeguarding responsibilities

Local authorities in the UK have a range of duties relating to safeguarding the welfare of children in their areas, which apply equally to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as to other children.

In June 2021, Kent County Council said it would no longer be able to accept statutory responsibility for children and young people arriving in the county to seek asylum in the UK.¹ Following this, the Home Office decided to house those children in hotels on an interim basis while they waited for a permanent local authority placement via the National Transfer Scheme.

Concerns have been raised regarding the legal status of unaccompanied children accommodated in hotels, and that this means the children are denied access to support provided to looked after children.

Safeguarding concerns

Several stakeholders have also raised concerns regarding the safeguarding of unaccompanied children in Home Office provided accommodation.²

A particular concern raised relates to the number of unaccompanied children who have gone missing from Home Office hotels. In January 2023, the [Government confirmed that there have been “440 missing occurrences and 200 children remain missing”](#) since July 2021.³

The Illegal Migration Bill

The [Illegal Migration Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament](#), would provide a legal basis for the Home Office to provide accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

The Government has emphasised the Bill does not change local authorities' responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and that it does not entail the Home Office taking on corporate parent responsibilities for unaccompanied children.

Several stakeholders have raised concerns about the Bill. The Children's Commissioner for England, for example has suggested the Bill would likely exacerbate existing issues.

¹ Independent Chief Inspector of Border and Immigration, [An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children \(UASC\) March-May 2022](#), October 2022, p5; “[Kent council refuses to accept more unaccompanied child migrants](#)”, The Guardian [online], 11 June 2022

² See section 9 of the [Library's briefing on the Bill](#) for more detailed background.

³ [HC Deb 24 January 2023](#), c859; see also [PQ HL6550, 3 April 2023](#).

1

Local authorities' safeguarding responsibilities

Local authorities in the UK have a range of duties relating to safeguarding the welfare of children in their areas, which apply equally to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as to other children. For example, in England this includes, but is not limited to, the following duties under part 3 of the [Children Act 1989](#):

- A duty under section 17 “to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need...by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children’s needs”. Further information is available in the Library briefing: [Local authority support for children in need \(England\)](#).⁴
- A duty under section 20 to provide accommodation to certain children in need, including those who require it because there is no one who has parental responsibility for them.⁵ A child provided with accommodation under section 20 for a continuous period of more than 24 hours is a looked after child.⁶

Local authorities are under a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children, and act as their corporate parent.⁷ More information on local authority duties with regard to looked after children is available in statutory guidance published by the Department of Education (DfE): [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review](#).⁸

Information on the safeguarding framework in the other parts of the UK is available on the NSPCC website:

- [Child protection system in Scotland](#).⁹
- [Child protection system in Wales](#).¹⁰
- [Child protection system in Northern Ireland](#).¹¹

⁴ Commons Library briefing CBP-7730, [Local authority support for children in need \(England\)](#)

⁵ [Children Act 1989](#), section 20

⁶ [Children Act 1989](#), section 22(1)

⁷ [Children Act 1989](#), section 22; [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), section 1; DfE, [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers](#), 26 February 2018

⁸ DfE, [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review](#), last updated 8 July 2021

⁹ NSPCC, [Child protection system in Scotland](#), last updated 24 October 2022

¹⁰ NSPCC, [Child protection system in Wales](#), last updated 7 November 2022

¹¹ NSPCC, [Child protection system in Northern Ireland](#), last updated 24 October 2022

Unaccompanied migrant children

In November 2017, the DfE published statutory guidance for local authorities on the [care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery](#).¹²

The guidance highlights the general local authority duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and notes an unaccompanied child will become a looked after child if they have been provided with accommodation by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 for 24 hours. It adds that the local authority's duties to looked after children under the 1989 Act apply equally to unaccompanied children and child victims of modern slavery who are looked after as they do to any other looked after child.¹³

1.1

The National Transfer Scheme

In July 2016, the Home Office launched the National Transfer Scheme in response to pressure on some local authorities arising from increases in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in the UK.¹⁴ The purpose of the scheme is to ensure a more equitable distribution of unaccompanied children by facilitating the safe transfer of unaccompanied children from one local authority to another.

The scheme initially operated on a voluntary basis. From 15 February 2022, all local authorities with children's services in the UK have been directed to participate in the scheme.¹⁵

Further information is available in the Government guidance: [National Transfer Scheme Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children](#).¹⁶

¹² DfE, [Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery](#), 1 November 2017

¹³ Department for Education, [Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery](#), November 2017

¹⁴ As above, para 37

¹⁵ Home Office, [National Transfer Scheme Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children](#), September 2022, pp3-4; [Councils to be forced to take child asylum seekers](#), BBC News, 23 November 2021

¹⁶ DfE & Home Office, [National Transfer Scheme Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children](#), last updated 5 September 2022

1.2

Housing of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Home Office operated hotels

In June 2021, Kent County Council said it would no longer be able to accept statutory responsibility for children and young people arriving in the county to seek asylum in the UK.¹⁷ Following this, the Home Office decided to house those children in hotels on an interim basis while they waited for a permanent local authority placement via the National Transfer Scheme.¹⁸

In response to a parliamentary question on 7 March 2023, the Immigration Minister, Robert Jenrick, said the Government “[had no alternative but to temporarily use hotels to give some unaccompanied children a roof over their heads whilst local authority accommodation is found.](#)”¹⁹

As of 8 February 2023, the average length of unaccompanied children’s stay in hotels was 20.11 days. The shortest stay was less than a day and the longest was 128 days.²⁰

Legal status of children in hotels

Concerns have been raised regarding the legal status of unaccompanied children accommodated in hotels, and that this means the children are denied access to support provided to looked after children.

[A report published by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in October 2022](#) said the hotels did not constitute a local authority placement and the Home Office had not assumed statutory responsibility for the children in them:

Correspondence between more than 60 charities and the Education Secretary between July and November 2021 confirmed that the use of hotels did not constitute a permanent local authority placement but were provided on a ‘short-term interim basis’, and it fell to local authorities to provide services under Part III of the Children Act 1989. No agency or government department has statutory responsibility for these children. The Home Office has not assumed this statutory responsibility and is not operating as the ‘corporate parent’. The local authorities of the areas where these hotels are located do

¹⁷ Independent Chief Inspector of Border and Immigration, [An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children \(UASC\) March-May 2022](#), October 2022, p5; “[Kent council refuses to accept more unaccompanied child migrants](#)”, The Guardian [online], 11 June 2022

¹⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children \(UASC\)](#), October 2022, p14

¹⁹ [PQ 153961 \[Asylum: Children\]](#), 7 March 2023

²⁰ As above

not have statutory responsibility for these young people as they are not considered to be 'Looked After'.²¹

It added that local authorities and stakeholders had raised concerns this meant children were prevented from "accessing the relevant safeguards" afforded to looked after children.²²

The report also quoted a concern recorded in the Home Office's 'UASC hotels risk register' in August 2021 that the department was running unregistered children's homes (see box below).²³

Children's homes

[The Care Standards Act 2000](#), as amended, says "an establishment in England is a children's home [subject to some additional provisions] if it provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children" (children are defined as people aged under 18). The Act additionally specifies certain types of accommodation that are not children's homes (eg, hospitals).²⁴

A blog published by [Ofsted in July 2019 provided some further discussion of what 'care' means](#) in this context:

What does 'care' mean? It is not defined in law. It is not just about the age of the child, although that's a factor. It is about a child's vulnerability and the level of help that they need. If a child does need care, then the service they're getting is very likely to need registration as a children's home. Certainly, if children are under constant supervision then this is likely to be 'care'.

It's also not about how long the child lives there. There is an all too common myth that if you only provide care for 28 days you do not need to register – this is not true! It does not matter how long you provide accommodation for. If you're providing care as well as accommodation, then you need to register.²⁵

Unless they meet the criteria for an exemption, establishments which meet the definition of a children's home are required to register with Ofsted. It is an offence to operate a children's home without the appropriate registration.²⁶

[The Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015 prescribe nine quality standards](#) which children's homes must meet, with further information provided in guidance published by the Department for Education.²⁷

²¹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children \(UASC\)](#), October 2022, p5

²² As above, pp42-43

²³ As above, p43

²⁴ [Care Standards Act 2000, s1; Children Act 1989, s 105\(1\)](#)

²⁵ Ofsted, [Unregistered and unregulated provision - what's the difference?](#), 8 July 2019

²⁶ [Care Standards Act 2000, s11](#)

²⁷ Department for Education, [Children's homes regulations, including quality standards: guide](#), 6 March 2015

1.3

Safeguarding concerns

Several stakeholders have raised concerns regarding the safeguarding of unaccompanied children in Home Office provided accommodation.²⁸

[Stella Creasy MP, for example, raised concerns that the Government has not included any safeguarding obligations](#) in their agreements with those hotels housing unaccompanied minors:

I have been asking to see the safeguarding requirements that he has placed on the private companies involved in running these hotels for both unaccompanied and accompanied children. I understand now why he was so reluctant to give that information: when I finally used a freedom of information request to get it, there was no mention at all of requiring these private companies, which are making millions of pounds running these places, to do anything about modern slavery or human trafficking—not one word.²⁹

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) examined the use of hotels to accommodate unaccompanied asylum-seeking children between March – May 2022. Among other things, the investigations described findings of [staff without Disclosure and Barring Service checks residing at the hotels a “significant concern”](#).³⁰

In response to a parliamentary question on 24 February 2023, [Robert Jenrick set out safeguarding measures at hotels](#) accommodating unaccompanied children:

The safety and wellbeing of those in our care is our primary concern. Robust safeguarding and welfare procedures are in place to ensure all children and minors are safe and supported as we seek urgent placements with a local authority. This includes support workers being onsite in the hotels 24 hours a day, supported by nurses and social workers. UASC are not detained and are free to leave the accommodation. All contingency sites have security staff and providers liaise closely with local police to ensure the welfare and safety of vulnerable residents.³¹

More broadly, concerns have been raised that hotels are not suitable longer-term accommodation for children. The [May – November 2021 ICIBI report](#) (PDF), for example, said:

²⁸ See section 9 of the [Library’s briefing on the Bill](#) for more detailed background.

²⁹ [HC Deb 24 January 2023](#), c867

³⁰ ICIBI, [An inspection of contingency asylum accommodation](#), GOV.UK, October 2022, p40; ICIBI, [Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children March – May 2022](#), 19 October 2022

³¹ [PQ 142660 \[Asylum: Children\]](#), 24 February 2023

Long-term hotel accommodation is not suitable for families with children. A hotel car park does not constitute a safe or appropriate play area, nor does it provide the variety of activities required by children.³²

[In April 2023, UN experts called for the UK Government](#) to “ensure the protection of all seeking asylum without discrimination and put an end to the practice of placing unaccompanied children in hotels”. The organisation said:

The UK Government appears to be failing to abide by its core obligations under international human rights law to ensure the best interests of the child, without discrimination, and to prevent trafficking of children.³³

Children going missing from hotels

A particular concern raised relates to the number of unaccompanied children who have gone missing from Home Office hotels. In response to an [urgent question on 24 January 2023, Robert Jenrick said](#):

We have no power to detain unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in these settings and we know some do go missing. Over 4,600 unaccompanied children have been accommodated in hotels since July 2021. There have been 440 missing occurrences and 200 children remain missing, 13 of whom are under 16 years of age and only one of whom is female.³⁴

A response to a further parliamentary question on 7 March 2023 provided information on the [protocol followed when a child or young person goes missing](#).³⁵

³² ICIBI, [An inspection of contingency asylum accommodation](#), GOV.UK, May 2022, p78

³³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, [UK: Protect unaccompanied children seeking asylum say UN experts](#), 11 April 2023

³⁴ [HC Deb 24 January 2023](#), c859; see also [PQ HL6550, 3 April 2023](#).

³⁵ [PQ 156968 \[Asylum: Children\]](#), 7 March 2023

2

Illegal Migration Bill

The [Illegal Migration Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament](#), would provide a legal basis for the Home Office to provide accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

The Bill provides for the Secretary of State to be under a duty to make arrangements for the removal of people who enter the UK illegally after 7 March 2023, have no permission to be in the UK and did not come directly from a place where they fear persecution.³⁶

This duty would not apply to an unaccompanied child while they are under 18, although the Secretary of State would have a power to remove them. Following an amendment made at Report Stage in the Commons, this power would only be able to be used in prescribed circumstances.³⁷

Clauses 15-20 of the Bill as it currently stands (following its Commons stages) are concerned with accommodation arrangements for unaccompanied children within the scope of the removal. In brief:

- Clause 15 would give the Secretary of State the power to provide, or arrange for the provision, of accommodation for unaccompanied children within scope of the arrangements for removal duty. The Secretary of State may also provide “other types of support for the child” while they are in the provided accommodation.
- Clause 16 provides a mechanism for unaccompanied children to be transferred from Home Office accommodation to a local authority and vice versa.
- Clause 17 would enable the Secretary of State to direct local authorities in England to provide information about the support and accommodation provided to children in their care, or other prescribed information (eg, information relevant to a child transferring to or from a local authority).
- Clause 18 would provide for the Secretary of State to be able to make an order declaring a local authority to be in default of a direction or duty under clauses 16 or 17. The order may contain directions to the local authority for the purpose of ensuring compliance.
- Clause 19 provides the Secretary of State may make regulations (subject to the affirmative procedure) enabling clauses 15 to 18 of the Bill to apply in relation to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

³⁶ [Illegal Migration Bill HL Bill 133 \(as brought from the Commons\)](#), clause 2.

³⁷ [Illegal Migration Bill HL Bill 133 \(as brought from the Commons\)](#), clause 3.

- Clause 20 would make consequential amendments to the Immigration Act 2016 to ensure children in scope of the duty to remove can be transferred from one local authority to another under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).

The Government has emphasised the Bill does not change local authorities' responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and that it does not entail the Home Office taking on corporate parent responsibilities for unaccompanied children. A Home Office factsheet on the Bill, for example, says:

We expect local authorities to meet their statutory obligations to children from the date of arrival and for the Home Office to only step in sparingly and temporarily. The best place for an unaccompanied child is within a local authority care placement and the bill does not change this position.

[...]

The Home Office is currently not in the position of corporate parent to any unaccompanied child. There is nothing in the bill which changes this position. The Home Office is not taking on corporate parent responsibilities for unaccompanied children.

The Home Office has always taken the view that these children should be in local authority care.

The Home Office does not have, and therefore cannot discharge, duties under part 3 of the Children Act 1989. It is for the local authority where an unaccompanied child is located to consider its duties under the Children's Act 1989.³⁸

Several stakeholders have raised concerns about the Bill. The Children's Commissioner for England, for example has suggested the Bill would likely exacerbate existing issues:

I have said on multiple occasions that the Home Office should not be provided with the legal power to accommodate children. I do not believe it has been able to adequately care for children in the hotels it has been providing since 2021, and creating this new power would likely exacerbate the issue.³⁹

Further information on the Bill, including stakeholder reaction to it, is provided in the following Library briefings:

- [Commons Library briefing CBP-9747](#), Illegal Migration Bill 2022-23 (briefing on the Bill as introduced to the Commons).
- [Commons Library briefing CBP-9776](#), Illegal Migration Bill: Progress of the Bill (briefing on the Bill as amended in Commons Committee).

³⁸ Home Office, [Illegal Migration Bill: children factsheet](#), 11 May 2023.

³⁹ Children's Commissioner, [Illegal Migration Bill – Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum](#), 11 April 2023

3 Parliamentary material

3.1 Early Day Motions

[Disappearance of migrant children from asylum hotels](#)

That this House notes concerning reports of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children disappearing from hotels; expresses concern for the welfare of these children; notes that several reports suggest that these children are being targeted and trafficked; further notes that in one example, 136 children went missing from one hotel in 18 months and that 79 of these children remain unaccounted for; and calls for the Home Office to immediately review safeguarding arrangements for asylum-seeking children in hotels.

23 Jan 2023 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 790 (session 2022-23)

Primary sponsor: Abbott, Ms Diane

3.2 Debate

[Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum](#) – HC Deb 10 Jan 2023 - 725 cc200-7WH

[Asylum Seekers: Accommodation and Safeguarding](#) – HL Deb 09 Nov 2022 - 825 cc641-5

[Asylum Seekers Accommodation and Safeguarding](#) – HC Deb 07 Nov 2022 - 722 cc25-82

3.3 Parliamentary question

[Asylum: Children](#)

Asked by: Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 10 May (HL Deb, col 1924), whether unaccompanied children seeking asylum who are to be detained under the Illegal Migration Bill are to be placed in "age appropriate accommodation", where these age-appropriate accommodation will be; what services will be provided in them, and by whom, that make them age appropriate; who will be responsible for the children placed there in terms of the duties in section 17 and 20 of the Children Act 1989; and who will have ultimate responsibility for running these accommodation.

Answering member: Lord Murray of Blidworth | **Department:** Home Office

The welfare of those who are detained is taken seriously. Where a decision is made to remove an unaccompanied child under 18, detention will be for the shortest possible time. The detention powers within the Bill can only be exercised to detain an unaccompanied child in specific circumstances that will be set out in regulations.

We will build upon our current detention facilities to ensure they provide appropriate, safe and secure accommodation. This includes working closely with the Department of Education and local authorities to ensure there are proper support provisions in detention for unaccompanied children.

The Home Secretary is responsible for all people in detention, including the day-to-day care of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

26 May 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL7794

Date tabled: 11 May 2023 | **Date for answer:** 25 May 2023 | **Date answered:** 26 May 2023

[Refugees: Children](#)

Asked by: Loughton, Tim

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Government plans to respond to the Children's Commissioner's letter of 5 April 2023 requesting information on unaccompanied child refugees who have been accommodated in hotels by her Department since July 2021.

Answering member: Robert Jenrick | **Department:** Home Office

Home Office officials continue to work collaboratively with the Children's Commissioner's Office in response to this request for information. We have introduced weekly meetings to provide the Children's Commissioner's office with progress updates directly and I have personally met with the Children's Commissioner twice. We will continue to work through the required legislative and legal processes to ensure this request is managed in the right way which is essential when answering a request of this sensitivity and size.

24 May 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 185180

Date tabled: 16 May 2023 | **Date for answer:** 18 May 2023 | **Date answered:** 24 May 2023

[Children: Detainees](#)

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Durham

To ask His Majesty's Government when a child is under the care and accommodation of the Home Office, due to the Home Secretary's duty to detain and remove under clause 2 of the Illegal Migration Bill, what international or domestic legislation the Home Office is required to meet.

Answering member: Lord Murray of Blidworth | **Department:** Home Office

The duty to make arrangements for the removal of an illegal migrant who meets the conditions in clause 2 of the Illegal Migration Bill does not apply to unaccompanied children, although clause 3(2) of the Bill confers a power to remove them in the circumstances set out in clause 3(3).

Clause 15 of the Bill further provides the Home Office with the power to provide or arrange accommodation and support for unaccompanied children. This power relates to non-detained accommodation.

The intention is to only provide accommodation and support to these children on a temporary basis before being transferred to a local authority.

We expect local authorities to continue to meet their statutory obligations to children from the date of arrival and for the Home Office to only step in sparingly and temporarily. The best place for these young people is and will remain within a local authority care placement.

The Home Office is not currently in the position of corporate parent to any unaccompanied child. There is nothing in the Bill which changes this position and it will continue to be for the local authority where an unaccompanied child is located to consider its duties under the Children Act 1989.

Detention powers in the Bill, including in relation to children, are set out in clause 10.

16 May 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL7628

Date tabled: 03 May 2023 | **Date for answer:** 18 May 2023 | **Date answered:** 16 May 2023

[Asylum: Children](#)

Asked by: Lord Touhig

To ask His Majesty's Government what system of monitoring they use to ensure that hotels accommodating unaccompanied migrant children meet the standards necessary for that purpose.

Answering member: Lord Murray of Blidworth | **Department:** Home Office

Any legal advice received by the Home Office is subject to legal professional privilege and, as such, we do not comment on legal advice that may or may not have been sought or received.

When considering whether to accommodate Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Home Office operated hotels, advice and guidance was sought from organisations with expertise and experience with young people. These included the Department for Education, the Home Office Safeguarding Advice and Children's Champion and local authorities.

This information was used to develop the processes and procedures to ensure the safety of the young people accommodated in the hotels.

Safeguarding is a key consideration when identifying potential hotels for temporary use. The Home Office undertake hotel specific risk assessments before contracting any site.

The Home Office takes the wellbeing, welfare and security of children and minors in our care extremely seriously. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure all children and minors are safe and supported as we seek urgent placements with local authorities.

We continue to consult multi-agency partners and subject matter experts to ensure our processes and procedures are robust and evolve as new trends or risks emerge.

29 Mar 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL6552

Date tabled: 15 Mar 2023 | **Date for answer:** 29 Mar 2023 | **Date answered:** 29 Mar 2023

[Asylum: Children](#)

Asked by: Winter, Beth

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were housed in hotels in the UK in each of the last 12 months; what the average length of stay was for those children; and how many and what proportion of those children went missing in the same period.

Answering member: Robert Jenrick | **Department:** Home Office

The rise in the number of small boat crossings has placed significant pressures on local authority care placements for young people. Out of necessity, and with the best interests of the child in mind, we have had no alternative but to temporarily use hotels to give unaccompanied children a roof over their heads whilst local authority accommodation is found.

The Home Office takes the wellbeing, welfare and security of children and minors in our care extremely seriously. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure all children and minors are safe and supported as we seek urgent placements with local authorities.

The National Transfer scheme (NTS) transferred 3,148 children to local authorities with children's services between 1 July 2021 and 30 September 2022, which is over four times the number of transfers on

the year before. To further expand the scheme, we are providing local authorities with children's services with an additional £15,000 for every eligible young person they take into their care from a dedicated UASC hotel, or the Reception and Safe Care Service in Kent, by the end of February 2023.

When any young person goes missing the 'missing persons protocol' is followed and led by our directly engaged social workers. A multi-agency, missing persons protocol is mobilised involving the police and the local authority, who have a shared statutory responsibility to safeguard all children including missing migrant children in order to establish their whereabouts and to ensure that they are safe.

The MARS (Missing After Reasonable Steps) protocol is followed for any looked after child who goes missing from a care setting, including the UASC hotels.

The average length of stay for those who arrived during this period was 19.85 days.

Of these 3,832 young people as of 28.02.23 there have been 410 missing episodes from the UASC Hotels, the number subsequently located on 224 occasions. Therefore 186 of these young people are still missing.

The safety and wellbeing of those in our care is our primary concern. Robust safeguarding and welfare procedures are in place to ensure all children and minors are safe and supported as we seek urgent placements with a local authority. This includes support workers being onsite in the hotels 24 hours a day, supported by nurses and social workers. UASC are not detained and are free to leave the accommodation. All contingency sites have security staff and providers liaise closely with local police to ensure the welfare and safety of vulnerable residents.

10 Mar 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 153958

Date tabled: 27 Feb 2023 | **Date for answer:** 01 Mar 2023 | **Date answered:** 10 Mar 2023

[Asylum: Hotels](#)

Asked by: Creasy, Stella

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which public bodies have (a) statutory responsibility for safeguarding residents and (b) power to inspect safeguarding provisions in asylum accommodation hotels.

Answering member: Robert Jenrick | **Department:** Home Office

The safety and wellbeing of asylum seekers in our care is of paramount importance to the Home Office. We have an important role to play in identifying those at risk and sharing relevant information with statutory agencies so they can fulfil their legal responsibilities.

The statutory agencies responsible for safeguarding adults and children are local authorities, health care providers and the police.

The Home Office has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children as detailed in Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009.

22 Feb 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 146955

Date tabled: 17 Feb 2023 | **Date for answer:** 22 Feb 2023 | **Date answered:** 22 Feb 2023

[Asylum: Hove](#)

Asked by: Byrne, Ian

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to recent reports of the abduction of unaccompanied children from a Home Office residence in Hove, what training was provided to security staff contracted by her Department to manage the security of those children.

Answering member: Robert Jenrick | **Department:** Home Office

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, extremely seriously. The wellbeing of children is our number one priority and our accommodation providers are required to ensure accommodation is safe and in line with contractual requirements.

It is also not true to say that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are being kidnapped from Home Office hotels. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are not detained and are free to leave the

accommodation. They may choose to leave for a number of reasons, such as visiting family.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to protect all children, regardless of where they go missing from. This can be from home or from a care setting as a looked-after child.

Home Office Safeguarding Hub works closely with accommodation providers to ensure early identification of vulnerabilities, where issues are not disclosed by customers, and onward referral to the statutory agencies of health, police, and social services. Asylum seekers have full access to the advisory services provided by Migrant Help who are available to contact 24/7. Contracted security staff within UASC hotels complete comprehensive training.

31 Jan 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 132556

Date tabled: 25 Jan 2023 | **Date for answer:** 31 Jan 2023 | **Date answered:** 31 Jan 2023

[Human Trafficking and Refugees: Children](#)

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to end the practice of placing unaccompanied refugee, migrant, or trafficked children in hotels without supervision.

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom | **Department:** Home Office

The UK is experiencing an unprecedented increase in the number of people making life-threatening journeys to cross the Channel. These boats are often carrying unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), which have placed unprecedented pressure on the National Transfer Scheme. Out of necessity with the children's best interests in mind, we have arranged for UASC to be accommodated on an emergency and temporary basis in hotels whilst placements with local authorities are being vigorously pursued.

The rise in dangerous small boats crossings means there are significant challenges on local authority care places. The Government has had no alternative but to urgently use hotels to give UASC arriving in the UK a roof over their heads. The Government wants to stop using

these hotels but the Home Office cannot do this alone. We are working round the clock with councils to boost the number of long-term care spaces available, through the New Plan for Immigration, and are offering them additional funding in addition to existing monthly funding.

The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) enables a more equitable distribution of responsibility for UASC between local authorities across the UK. However, the high number of UASC arrivals, particularly as a result of small boat crossings, continues to place unprecedented pressure on the NTS.

In November 2021, we took the decision to move to a directed NTS, in addition to the package of NTS improvements implemented in July 2021. Since 15 February all local authorities with children's services in the UK have been directed to participate in the NTS. However, intake remains very high, and the situation remains challenging.

We continue to take action to ensure the NTS works effectively so that children are transferred promptly and to end the use of hotels.

On 24 August 2022, we wrote to all UK local authorities and devolved equivalents with children's services, announcing changes to the NTS. We have increased the threshold up to which councils have to accept UASC into their care from the previous level of 0.07% to 0.1% of their general child population, halved the transfer deadline to five working-days for all UASC not currently in the care of a local authority, and for UASC awaiting transfer into local authority care, we will provide councils with an additional £2000 per child per month for 3 months.

It is not the case that these children are unsupervised. UASC temporarily accommodated in hotels are supported with wrap-around care, including from professional care workers, social workers, and nurses.

21 Sep 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL2128

Date tabled: 05 Sep 2022 | **Date for answer:** 20 Sep 2022 | **Date answered:** 21 Sep 2022

[Refugees: Children](#)

Asked by: Simmonds, David

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to protect children who have been separated from parents and family on arrival in the UK.

Answering member: Will Quince | **Department:** Department for Education

The department takes the welfare of all unaccompanied children extremely seriously and is committed to ensuring they are properly safeguarded. Statutory duties placed on the local authority in respect of unaccompanied children will apply to any child arriving in the UK who has been separated from their parents and family.

In England Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (CA89) imposes a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of 'children in need' in their area. Section 20 CA89 imposes a duty to accommodate children in need if they meet the relevant criteria.

Generally, once a child has been accommodated by a local authority continuously for more than 24 hours, they become a looked after child and should be safeguarded and have their welfare promoted in the same way as any other looked after child, taking account of their particular needs. Any child separated from their parents and family would likely remain accommodated by the local authority, until such time as they can be re-united when possible and appropriate.

06 Apr 2022 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 149458

Date tabled: 29 Mar 2022 | **Date for answer:** 31 Mar 2022 | **Date answered:** 06 Apr 2022

3.4

Committee material

[Inquiry - Human Rights of Asylum Seekers in the UK](#)

Joint Committee on Human Rights - Oral evidence transcripts, written evidence and other publications

[Joint letter from the Chair of the JCHR and Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee to the Home Secretary relating to unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK, dated 31 March](#)

Joint Committee on Human Rights - Inquiry - Legislative Scrutiny: Illegal Migration Bill

[Correspondence to Good Law Project and other organisations relating to hotel accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, dated 16 March](#)

Joint Committee on Human Rights - Inquiry - Human Rights of Asylum Seekers in the UK

[Correspondence from Good Law Project and other organisations relating to hotel accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, dated 3 March](#)

Joint Committee on Human Rights - Inquiry - Human Rights of Asylum Seekers in the UK

[Correspondence to the Children's Commissioner relating to asylum-seeking children, dated 2 February 2023](#)

Joint Committee on Human Rights - Work - Children's Commissioner (Non-inquiry session)

4 Media

4.1 Articles, blogs and press releases

[UK Government's new asylum bill threatens to lock up thousands of refugee children who come to the UK alone – Refugee Council and Barnardo's joint release](#)

Refugee Council

24 April 2023

[Housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in hotels is unlawful, letter argues](#)

Good Law Project

14 April 2023

[UK: Protect unaccompanied children seeking asylum say UN experts](#)

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

11 April 2023

[Family court asked to protect unaccompanied children](#)

Article 39

29 March 2023

[Sixty-six children still missing after vanishing from Brighton asylum hotel](#)

Guardian

29 March 2023

[Department for Education hit with pre-action protocol letter over placing of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in hotels](#)

Local Government Lawyer

20 March 2023

[Quakers call for inquiry into use of hotels for vulnerable asylum-seeking children. Includes a letter to the Joint Committee on Human Rights](#)

Quakers

15 March 2023

[Help at Hand's recent visit to unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Home Office accommodation](#)

Children's Commissioner

13 March 2023

[Asylum-seeker hotels for children 'a supermarket for gangs'](#)

BBC

07 March 2023

[No Place Like \(The\) Home\(Office\): Unaccompanied Children And Legal Parentage](#)

Law Faculty Blogs, University of Oxford

03 March 2023

[Response to the independent scrutiny report on missing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children](#)

Brighton and Hove City Council

01 March 2023

[Housing Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in Hotels: Joint Statement with the International Child Health Group \(ICHG\)](#)

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

15 February 2023

[Home Office will act as legal parent for child refugees](#)

Times

14 February 2023

[The government must urgently make clear who is responsible for children seeking asylum](#)

Institute for Government

01 February 2023

[Placements ‘do not exist’ for asylum-seeking children in hotels – ADCS](#)

Community Care

27 January 2023

[Over 100 charities call for action on children going missing from Home Office hotels, at risk of trafficking and exploitation](#)

ECPAT UK

26 January 2023

[Home Office ignored charity’s offers to house asylum-seeking children](#)

Open Democracy

26 January 2023

[UK minister admits 200 asylum-seeking children have gone missing](#)

[Guardian](#)

24 January 2023

[Statement on child asylum seekers being kidnapped](#)

Barnado's

23 January 2023

['They just vanish': whistleblowers met by wall of complacency over missing migrant children](#)

The Observer

21 January 2023

[Children missing from Brighton hotel highlight plight of unaccompanied asylum seekers](#)

FT

27 January 2023

[Asylum seekers: Home Office accused of 'catastrophic child protection failure'](#)

Guardian

22 October 2023

[Home Office hotels not fit to house unaccompanied child asylum seekers](#)

Free Movement

21 October 2022

[Refugee Council expresses alarm over hundreds of children under 16 being housed in hotels as damning inspection is published](#)

Refugee Council

19 October 2022

[Home Office admits it is illegally housing unaccompanied child asylum seekers in hotels](#)

Independent

19 October 2022

[Exclusive: Hotel accommodation for unaccompanied children 'at capacity' as councils told to house more](#)

Local Government Chronicle

01 September 2022

[ECPAT UK response: Home Office announcement on use of hotels for unaccompanied children](#)

ECPAT UK

02 September 2022

[Faster accommodation moves for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children](#)

Home Office

24 August 2022

5

Further reading and organisations

[Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium Briefing: the use Home Office hotels for unaccompanied children seeking asylum. Briefing for parliamentarians on the use of Home Office hotels for unaccompanied children seeking asylum](#), ECPAT UK, 01 February 2023

[Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children \(UASC\) Scrutiny Paper](#), Brighton and Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership, February 2023

[An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children \(UASC\) March – May 2022](#), Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, 19 October 2022

[Response to a report on hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum seeking children](#), March to May 2022, Home Office, 19 October 2022

[Outside the frame: Unaccompanied children denied care and protection](#), ECPAT. June 2022

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