

## SAFEGUARDING QUARTERLY UPDATE (1)

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).

### Tackling child sexual abuse

On 22 January 2021, the government published its [strategy](#) for tackling child sexual abuse. This strategy is the first of its kind in setting out the government's vision for preventing, tackling, and responding to child sexual abuse in all its forms, whether it is committed in person or online, in families or communities, here in this country or overseas. It is based on 3 objectives:

- objective 1: tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and bringing offenders to justice.
- objective 2: preventing offending and re-offending.
- objective 3: protecting and safeguarding children and young people, and supporting all victims and survivors.

### Notifying the Home Office about a child safeguarding practice review

The UK wide nature in which 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. In light of this, we have 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 area(s).

The NCCU can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 03000 134 999 or [CommandandControlUnit@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto: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 work on tackling modern slavery

With tackling modern slavery, human trafficking, and child sexual abuse and exploitation all leading priorities for Border Force, operational staff at locations across the UK implement a range of measures to identify victims and perpetrators as well as safeguarding and supporting adults or children at risk of being exploited. You can learn more at [GOV.UK](#) about Border Force's commitment to tackling modern slavery.

## Strengthening our response to unaccompanied children arriving in Kent

To help strengthen our response to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving at Dover, UKVI has recently recruited 6 social workers to conduct short age assessments there. These short assessments support the appropriate identification of placements for local authorities that are providing placements through the [national transfer scheme](#).

## Operation Innerste

Operation Innerste was developed in 2016 as a multi-agency safeguarding response to the complex issues surrounding missing unaccompanied migrant children.

Chaired by Devon and Cornwall Police, the Home Office has worked with police forces, Non-Government Organisations, and the Association of Directors of Children's Services to design an enhanced process whereby the first responder (usually the police) engages in conversation with the child to build early rapport. This provides the child with a safe environment to express their needs and concerns, and the opportunity for authorities to explain the support, services and protection entitled to them. The creation of a relationship of trust between the professional and the child is intended to reduce the influence of traffickers and prevent them from absconding and going missing.

As part of the process, the first responder completes an initial welfare / safeguarding form, obtains fingerprints and photographs, using both immigration and Common Law powers which are passed on to Immigration Enforcement's NCCU for uploading on to immigration systems. Capturing fingerprints and photographs is essential to allow the police and immigration departments to identify children later if they go missing, commit crime, are trafficked or are found in distressing circumstances.

The aim is to roll out this standardised process to all 43 UK police forces, local authority children's services, Immigration Enforcement, UKVI and Education. To find out more or if you'd like to get involved, please email [modernslavery@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk](mailto:modernslavery@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk).

## Independent Child Trafficking Guardians

An [Independent Child Trafficking Guardian](#) (ICTG) provides independent advice and support to potentially trafficked children and can advocate on their behalf.

Delivered by Barnardo's, the ICTG service is provided in addition to statutory support, with ICTGs working closely with local authority safeguarding professionals. An ICTG Direct Worker provides support where there is no parental responsibility for the child in the UK, while an expert ICTG Regional Practice Co-ordinator provides support where there is someone with parental responsibility.

The ICTG service is currently available in Hampshire, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, East Midlands, Croydon and across Wales. It is, however, expanding to the following 11 additional areas this month: London (excluding Croydon where it is already available), Essex, West Yorkshire, Merseyside, Kent, Surrey, Warwickshire, Bedfordshire, North Yorkshire, Gloucestershire and Bristol, and Lancashire.

You can email [NRMReform@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:NRMReform@homeoffice.gov.uk) if you would like more information about the ICTG service. If you would like to receive updates on the rollout of the service, you can sign up to the [National Referral Mechanism Reform newsletter](#).

## Operation Lancien

Operation Lancien is an ongoing intelligence investigation into EEA Family Permit and EU Settlement Scheme Family Permit visa abuse by some applicants from Ghana and Gambia. There are safeguarding concerns associated with some of these cases, such as the possibility that children have been trafficked to the UK.

Frontline staff across the Home Office (at the border for example) have been advised to be vigilant to any safeguarding concerns and the potential for human trafficking in these cases, while UKVI are working with the police, children's services, and the National Crime Agency to review information for referrals submitted through Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs.

## Implementing the independent Windrush Lessons Learned Review

As part of the Home Office response to the independent [Windrush Lessons Learned Review](#) (WLLR) by Wendy Williams, our team - Safeguarding Advice and the Children's Champion (SACC) are working with leads from across the department to implement its safeguarding related recommendations. These are:

- **On ethical decision-making (Recommendation 17):** we are leading a reflective supervision pilot across our complex casework teams to develop a model which supports operational staff in collaborative thinking and helps them consider, at all stages, the impact of their decisions on the person who made the application.
- **On our complaints process (Recommendation 20):** we are reviewing the existing Home Office complaints procedure for children across migration, borders and citizenship directorates and developing a framework for a new, child-friendly process.
- **On engaging with children and young people:** brought to light by the 'Openness to Scrutiny' theme across several recommendations in the WLLR, we are establishing a **Young People's Board in England** (and also in each of the devolved administrations) for children and young people, aged 13-24, to discuss and give their views on a range of migration, borders, and citizenship related issues which are a priority for and directly affect them. We expect the first board meeting in England will take place next month.

## Contacting SACC

In addition to the above hyperlinks and email addresses, please don't hesitate to contact us at [ChildrensChampion@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ChildrensChampion@homeoffice.gov.uk) if you would like to learn more about any of the information included in this update.