

Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children March – May 2022

News story

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Publishing the report, David Neal, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), said:

It is clear that the housing of these extremely vulnerable children in hotels represents a significant challenge to the Home Office, in both ethical and operational terms. This is not an area in which the Home Office should be operating. A clear cross-Government approach is required.

The young people who spoke to inspectors all stated that they were happy and felt safe in the hotels, although the majority were keen to move on and resume their education. Inspectors found Home Office and contractor staff were, in the main, committed and engaged in their work and keen to provide the best possible environment for the young people in their care. However, this inspection did find areas of significant concern including two cases of staff who had not been Disclosure and Barring Service checked residing at hotels.

More broadly, while the initial crisis response had transitioned to a business-as-usual operation, the practices and procedures developed by the Home Office did not represent a child-centred approach that fully acknowledged and provided for the safeguarding and wellbeing needs of the young people in the department's care. Similarly absent was consistent and effective oversight by the Home Office of contractor activity. Guidance, processes and policies were slowly being developed but this gap in clarity led to clear shortcomings in the provision of key services for these children.

Although staff referred to the need to end the use of hotels, there was little in the way of concrete planning for this to be achieved and no timelines provided by the Home Office.

As we found in [the inspection into the processing of migrants at Tug Haven and Western Jet Foil](#), a disjointed response at day one or even week one could be excused but at month 10 this is not acceptable. Senior leadership action is needed to unlock the sub-optimal ownership of this issue in order that these children and those who will keep on arriving over the next days and weeks receive a more effective service. In essence, a recognition of the enduring nature of the requirement is needed.

I am particularly grateful for the expertise and assistance provided by Ofsted inspectors who accompanied my inspectors during the onsite phase of the inspection.

This inspection made four time-bound recommendations. The Home Office has accepted one recommendation and partially accepted three. I welcome the news that the Home Office has moved to a sole occupancy model which means members of hotel staff, including those without DBS checks, are no longer able to sleep or reside onsite. However, it is disappointing to note that the time-bound nature of the recommendations appears to be a barrier to full acceptance, that overall the pace of implementation appears slow and that processes necessary to ensure the safeguarding of children remain 'in development'. This approach continues to ignore the vulnerability of these children.

This inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary for publication on 9 June 2022.

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