

News story: Inspection report published: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, David Bolt, has published his inspection report on how the Home Office considers the 'best interests' of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

The completed report was sent to the Home Secretary on 7 February 2018.

In 2017, the Independent Chief Inspector commissioned a literature review to assist with its planned programme of inspection work in relation to children. The review, compiled by Adrian Matthews, formerly Senior Policy Development Officer at the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, is published alongside this inspection report.

Mr Bolt said:

The UK's treatment of asylum seeking children is a matter of considerable public interest. In this inspection, I looked specifically at the Home Office's handling of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and in particular at how it ensured that the 'best interests' of the child were properly considered throughout the asylum process. This included how those interests were met for those children transferred from one Local Authority area to another under the National Transfer Scheme. This inspection was the second in what I intend to be a series of inspections focused on the treatment of children by the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System. The first report, published in July 2017, dealt with the Home Office's application of the good character requirement in the case of young persons who apply for registration as British citizens.

It also sits alongside my report on the Home Office's Asylum Intake and Casework, which was published in November 2017.

My predecessor reported in 2013 on the handling of asylum applications from unaccompanied children. In that inspection he made 9 recommendations, covering: consistency of treatment; family tracing; timeliness of asylum decisions; performance targets; development of statistics; data quality/record-keeping; quality of refusal letters; consistency of initial interviews; and referrals to Refugee Council.

The Home Office accepted all 9 recommendations, and "closed" them all between October 2013 and May 2016, having satisfied itself that it had taken the necessary actions. This latest inspection showed

that it now needed to revisit most of these areas and make improvements that stick.

In addition, improvements are needed in relation to the National Transfer Scheme, in how the Home Office communicates with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and stakeholders, and in the use of UASC leave. This report contains just 2 recommendations, although each breaks down into several parts. Overall, there is a considerable amount of work for the Home Office to do. Given the impact the asylum system has on the lives of those children and young people who come into contact with it, I hope that the Home Office can move quickly to make the necessary improvements.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this inspection. My special thanks go to Adrian Matthews for his literature review of children's rights and 'best interests', which provided the foundations for this inspection.

[An inspection of the best interests of unaccompanied asylum seeking children
Home Office's response to the Chief Inspector's reports.](#)