

Improving the UK care system for young asylum seekers

Lauren Starkey
Independent Social Worker

Immigration enforcement

The Hostile Environment embeds immigration enforcement principles into all aspects of life in the UK for those who migrate, including unaccompanied children.

Children are forced to recount their trauma as they go through the asylum system.

The IMA 2023 signals the Home Secretary's intention to remove unaccompanied children.





The care system

Migrant children are not seen as children - 'adultification'

Semi-independent accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds is disproportionately used for unaccompanied children.

Children placed alone in hotels by the Home Office

Lack of specific training for social workers and managers

Age Assessments

Increasing numbers of children are being age disputed.

The standard for disputing age changed from 'visibly over 25' to 'visibly over 18'.

The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 introduced so-called scientific methods, bolstered by the IMA 2023.

The problem is not adults falsely claiming to be children, it's children being wrongly deemed to be adults.



Mental health

Unaccompanied children and young people have suffered trauma at a pivotal moment in their development.

The asylum system has a profound impact on children's mental health.

Mental health services do not have the required specialism.



Trafficking and exploitation

44% of referrals to the NRM in 2023 were for children.

Hostile immigration policy increases children and young people's vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation.

Children who arrived without prior authorisation are barred from NRM support under the IMA 2023.



Child trafficking and exploitation is child abuse, and we all have a duty to prevent it.



What needs to happen?

Repeal the IMA 2023.

All unaccompanied children to be given residence permits.

Leave to remain to be granted to anyone with a positive conclusive grounds decision from the NRM.

Return to the 'over 25' standard for age disputes and abolish the National Age Assessment Board

What needs to happen?

Increased funding and resources for children's social care and mental health services.

Social work education to include training on supporting migrant children and young people.

Return to the principles of social justice and rights based social work.

All responsibility and decision-making regarding care for children to be removed from the Home Office.



**Think of the most vulnerable person you know
and vote in their best interests.**



Any questions?

Lauren.StarkeySW@gmail.com