



Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile
Age Dispute Report 2024

Looking for “the youthful lustre”

**The experiences of age-disputed young people at
the Baobab Centre, in their own words**

About the Baobab Centre

The Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile is a non-residential therapeutic community for young asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived as unaccompanied minors to the UK. For 16 years we have been providing non-time limited free individual and group psychotherapy, casework support, and a community of exile for these young people living in London. We currently see 73 young people on a regular basis, from 25 countries, with 20 languages spoken in our community. All arrived under the age of 18 and, with few exceptions, via “irregular routes”.

This report gives voice to 27 young people in our community by directly quoting from their testimonies about their age disputes. This information is complemented by information available in legal documents, age-assessment reports, and their therapist’s testimonies. Our intention is not to provide more data on the already well-documented cases of malpractice in age-assessments but simply to share the experiences of those directly impacted by them. As shocking as these anecdotes are, they really happened.

We publish this information in the hope that it will help inform debates on the practice of age-assessments so that the practice returns to its roots as a *child-protection mechanism*, not as an asylum determination tool, within the context of careful *needs-based assessments of children where the best interests of children are front and centre of any consideration*, as the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (to which the UK is a party) so clearly demands.

the Committee urges the State party:

(e) To put an end to the use of unreliable and invasive procedures for determining a child’s age, develop an age determination procedure that is child- and gender-sensitive, includes multidisciplinary assessments conducted by relevant professionals of the child’s maturity and level of development and respects the legal principle of the benefit of the doubt and ensure that children have access to legal advice throughout the process and, if necessary, can challenge the outcome of such assessments;

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, 22 June 2023

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g23/112/77/pdf/g2311277.pdf>

General Introduction

Age assessments are at the heart of a UK asylum system that is failing young people who arrive unaccompanied to the UK. Existing data from the Home Office shows that in 2023 alone, 3,412 unaccompanied minors asked for asylum in the UK¹ -- that is, minors *accepted as minors by the Home Office on arrival*. Many more children arrive unaccompanied to find themselves disbelieved about their age immediately upon arrival. Recent reports from the Helen Bamber Foundation² and Refugee Council³ have found that thousands of children per year are being incorrectly age-assessed by the Home Office, leading to serious safeguarding issues ranging from inadequate educational provisions to minors accommodated, and even imprisoned, with adults.

The young people in our community are no strangers to the many issues resulting from age-disputes. While the 70-80 young people who we see regularly in our community are only a very small sub-group of all children who currently arrive on our shores without parental figures, and while all children deserve warm and involved care on arrival, the young people in our community are a particularly vulnerable group. According to our latest available data, 95% have experienced at least one traumatic event before reaching the UK – child-specific human rights abuses either in their countries of origin or enroute to safety - and 90% have arrived without any parental figure here. Yet, despite their clear vulnerabilities, our internal data on their asylum claims shows that the UK asylum system encountered on arrival fails to adequately assess their need for protection (box 1).

¹ Home Office, *Immigration System Statistics Data Tables*, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6645ba34993111924d9d3613/asylum-applications-datasets-mar-2024.xlsx>

² Helen Bamber Foundation, *Disbelieved and Denied: Children seeking asylum wrongly treated as adults by the Home Office* (April 2023). Available at <https://www.helenbamber.org/resources/reportsbriefings/disbelieved-and-denied-children-seeking-asylum-wrongly-treated-adults>

³ Refugee Council, *Forced Adulthood: The Home Office's incorrect determination of age and how this leaves child refugees at risk* (January 2024). Available at <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/resources/forced-adulthood-the-home-offices-incorrect-determination-of-age-and-how-this-leaves-child-refugees-at-risk/>

- *On average, our young people have had to wait 3 years and 8 months for a positive asylum decision offering them some protection.*
- *60% of our young community members received an initial negative decision.*
- *But after a long, contested, and fraught process, 85% have now received the protection they were due on arrival.*

Box 1: long waiting times to receive asylum in our community (source: Baobab Centre, internal data, 2024)

As with all young people who have experienced similar long waiting times for asylum, these delays mean years lost to education and socialisation, and a sense of uncertainty that is both over-powering and shattering to their sense of identity. As a result, such delays often complicate the therapeutic recovery and set these young people back on their difficult road to rehabilitation.

35%

of our young
people have been
age-disputed

At the heart of these delays are age disputes. According to our internal data, **35% of the young people we are currently seeing have been age-disputed.**

On average, the Home Office has assessed these young people to be **4.5 years older than they actually are** – and none of our young people has ever been assessed to be younger than they claimed.

64%

eventually recognized they
were the age they initially
claimed.

64% have so far been recognized, after long procedures, to be the age they initially claimed they were –and many are still appealing wrong age-assessments. For our community of vulnerable young people, as for young people across the UK⁴, **the Home Office has been wrong more often than right.**

The consequences of these wrong age-assessments are far reaching. In the evidence we have gathered from the young people in our community⁵, there are five key concerns that emerge:

1. Age assessments are cursory and mostly based on pseudo-scientific visual cues.
2. They are not sensitive to culture-specific differences on aging, and they are clearly not trauma-informed.
3. Age disputes have long-term impacts on our young people's asylum claims, social care, and access to education.
4. They lead to significant safeguarding issues
5. They have devastating mental health consequences.

⁴ Research by the Refugee Council and the Helen Bamber Foundation published in their joint report *Forced Adulthood* in January 2024 found that across the UK 57% of age-disputed children had been recognized to be the age they initially claimed they were in 2023.

⁵ All case-studies have been anonymised and specific consent obtained from all young people whose evidence we use.

Our Young People's Concerns

1. Age assessments are cursory and mostly based on pseudo-scientific visual cues.

One of the most frequent complaints we see in the direct testimonies of our young people is that the process of age assessment is experienced as cursory and as relying on pseudo-science rather than on evidence. This is certainly the case for age assessments conducted at the border by Home Office personnel immediately upon arrival (and after a boat journey that can take 7 to 10 hours), where interviews typically take 30 minutes or less. Moreover, too many of our young people also complain of Local Authority-conducted age assessments that in appearance follow a Merton-compliant process⁶ but end up relying on visual and demeanour cues of doubtful validity.

The most troubling testimonies from our young people are the ones detailing the procedure for assessing age at Dover as the young people arrive. John⁷ said they were interviewed “with a headache... because of the long journey and drinking too much salt water”. More testimonies include:

- Adam reported standing in line waiting for a bus to take him to hotel accommodation outside of Kent intake unit when a Border Force agent walked to him and lifted his hair covering his eye saying: “you’re not a child”. He was 15 at the time (2022) and had arrived on a small boat. Months later, the young person received his ARC card with the mention “age-disputed”. This was the first time he had heard about this.

⁶ Merton-compliant age assessments are bound by caselaw to follow guidelines established in [B \(R\) v London Borough of Merton 2003](#). See the guidance published by The Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), [Age Assessment Guidance](#), 2015.

⁷ All the names in this report have been changed.

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- Adil arrived (2021) age 13 on the back of a lorry after a lengthy journey from Afghanistan but was given an age 12 years older on arrival. He described a process where a border guard just walked in the room, took his details, didn't ask any questions and decided the new date of birth. The conclusion was based only on visual appearance. The young person was then moved to hotel for adults where safeguarding concerns were raised with the contracted accommodation provider but led to no outcome. The young person was denied access to CAMHS and education on account of this cursory age assessment.

All young people who have arrived on small boats in recent years will have gone through a similar process, but these are just two recent examples. They also show the long-term impacts on access to care that these cursory decisions can have on children's and young people's welfare.

The time age assessments interviews take also surfaces as an issue in testimonies about age assessments conducted by Local Authorities, even when they aim to be Merton-compliant and take place over a month in several sessions: sometimes the sessions are all online, or there is just one short session or a succession of 2 or 3 sessions where hard evidence from the young person's network is systematically disregarded. In most cases at Dover, but also in many Local Authority cases, young people did not have access to quality interpretation and hence did not understand the questions they were being asked. One young person said that their interpreter (present only through the phone) changed after one hour and the next interpreter spoke Farsi instead of Dari which made communication between all parties impossible.

Importantly, our documentation highlights that the assessments are incomplete and without reference to multi-disciplinary insight. In the testimonies, the assessors are often from the same professional background (either Border force personnel or social workers) and do not draw on other professionals to complement their observations. Furthermore, many young people expressed that the reports written by members of

their networks (schools, key-workers, medical professionals...) were overlooked or ignored.⁸

Again and again, the documentation we collected with our population shows that most age assessment relied, sometimes exclusively, on visual or demeanour cues. Shockingly, this practice is entirely in line with the latest official Home Office guidance (see box 2)

“You must treat the claimant as an adult if their physical appearance and demeanour very strongly suggests they are significantly over 18 years of age”.

(p. 17)

“The assessment of an individual’s physical appearance may include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following potential indicators of age:

- height
- build
- facial features, including facial hair, skin lines or folds, tone and weathering
- voice, including tone, pitch and expression (particularly in respect of males)”

(p. 18)

Box 2: problematic Home Office guidance on visual and demeanor cues for age assessments (Source: Home Office, Age Assessment (v. 8.0), 4 Nov. 2024, available: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/672e169e4f7608e424ffdab1/Assessing+age.pdf>

This guidance is based on arbitrary and unscientific assumptions. In one egregious example from our documentation, local authority assessors concluded that Taha was 4 years older than his stated age because his Adam's apple was pronounced, and his veins were visible on his hands. A paediatrician later read this age-assessment report and remarked that the assumptions made by the social workers were taken from articles in *Cosmopolitan* magazine about reversing aging in middle-aged women. The same age assessment report also noted that “[the YP’s] skin seems to have lost the youthful lustre that is generally associated with young people of his claimed age.”

⁸ A recent report from Young Roots analysed the quality of decision making in recent age assessments led by social workers and came to a similar conclusion, with “objective sources to back up parts of the assessment [being] underused” and a general “under-utilisation of evidence” (p. 1). Their report, *Good Decision-Making in Age Assessment* (Sept. 2024), is available here: <https://www.youngroots.org.uk/blog/age-assessments-have-huge-consequences>.

Pseudo-science of this magnitude should have no place in age assessments. In reality, looking for “the youthful lustre” -- or equivalent visual cues -- is the primary method used to determine young people’s ages as they arrive.⁹

2. Age assessments are not sensitive to culture-specific differences on aging, and they are not trauma-informed.

It is clear from the testimonies and reports gathered at Baobab that despite words of caution included in official Home Office guidance,¹⁰ age assessments are conducted by Home Office personnel untrained in both the culture-specific differences of aging and the effects of trauma on aging.

Cultural differences and racialization

As mentioned above, the age-assessments rarely include a multi-disciplinary approach and they do not include experts on the cultures of the young people being assessed. Consequently, culture-specific differences on aging are overlooked. This is important because the debatable visual cues used in age assessments such as height, facial hair and tone of voice vary with different ethnic backgrounds. There is abundant literature on this topic¹¹ and Home Office personnel should be trained to avoid making racialized¹²

⁹ As documented in the recent Young Roots report quoted above that examines prevalent practices among social workers conducting age assessments: “The research found that in the sample of age assessment reports, the physical appearance of the young person was the most noted and relied-upon factor for assessing age” (p. 1).

¹⁰ The latest Home Office guidance on age assessments (v. 8.0, 4 Nov. 2024) notes: “When determining the weight to be applied to these [visual cues], the subsequent information on the limitations on using them must be borne in mind: ethnicity and genetic background can affect physical appearance, for example: it is normal in some cultures for boys to have facial hair at an early age and for girls to develop at different ages”, or: “It is essential to take account of how the individual presents and their attitude and relate this to the culture of the country of origin and events preceding your interaction with them, for example, their experiences during their journey to the UK.” (p. 18). It is clear such warnings largely go unheeded in practice.

¹¹ For instance see Wells, Karen. 2009. *Childhood in Global Perspective*. Cambridge, or Crawley, Heaven. “‘Asexual, Apolitical Beings’: The Interpretation of Children’s Identities and Experiences in the UK Asylum System”. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 8 (1 September 2011): 1171–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.590645>.

¹² Writing in reference to practices in Switzerland, Johannes Oertli concludes that age assessment practices are “a racialized procedure that comes to exclude certain bodies from the protection that children are entitled to.” In Johannes Balthasar Oertli, “Forensic Age Estimation in Swiss Asylum Procedures: Race in the Production of Age,” *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees* 35, no. 1 (2019): 8–17.

and unfounded assumptions. Taha for example, who was brought up in a culture where making eye-contact with adults is a sign of disrespect, shared that the assessor at his local authority age assessment shouted at him and exclaimed “Look at me in the eye! Sit straight”. The fact that the young person looked at them straight in the eye was later used as evidence in support of the assessor’s decision to disbelieve the young person and assign him an over-18 age.

As noted above with age assessments relying on visual cues, disbelief borne of misinterpreted cultural cues by ill-trained personnel becomes embedded in the Home Office’s appreciation of their overall asylum claim and has long-lasting consequences. Jaden’s case is illustrative of this issue:

- Jaden arrived age 16 from Guinea and was given an age 8 years older – leading to a lengthy, 11 year-wait for asylum protection as he was disbelieved. The source of official disbelief was his age assessment, which he described as “short and superficial”. The young person mentions being disbelieved as he could not remember whether or not he had attended “kindergarten”, a word that he did not know, and which had in his experience very little significance in the Guinean society he had left behind.

Accounting for trauma

We have found very little evidence that age assessment processes, whether conducted by the Border Force or social workers upon arrival or later by Local Authorities, are conducted with any awareness of the traumatic experiences that many people arriving have had – a point that is particularly striking for our population at the Baobab Centre where vulnerabilities appear to have never been picked up on arrival. John arrived via small boat in 2022 aged 15. Immediately upon arrival, at the Dover intake unit, the Home Office decided he was 26. This is how the young person remembers the process:

"I was allowed to rest for a few hours while waiting to be interviewed. They asked me questions about my journey, why I left Afghanistan, and how I arrived in the UK. When they asked me about my age, I told them that I was 15. There was an interpreter, but I didn't understand anything they said. I was too tired, and I had a headache. I think it was because of the long journey and drinking too much salt water. I was answering all their questions with "yes" or "no". I don't even remember what date of birth I gave, because I was so exhausted, hungry, and dehydrated. I just wanted the interview to be over, so that I could rest. Honestly, I probably just gave them some random numbers so that it would end..."

Many young people arriving at Dover will have experienced very similar treatment. But the lack of attention to how trauma may impact the young people is also clear in reports of age assessments by Local Authorities. For instance, it is well known that one psychological consequence of trauma is what psychologists call a narrowing of the "window of tolerance"¹³ – the state where people can learn or relate to others in an emotionally-regulated way. Trauma will impact expectations, trust, and this fundamental ability to regulate emotions and feel safe, especially when relating with strangers.¹⁴ At a minimum, a "trauma-informed" approach to conducting interviews should be aware of this and account for the possibility that a young person may be struggling with self-regulation under intense and lengthy questioning. Planning for frequent intervals and sensitive questions that allow time for young people to answer would be one way of "trauma-informing" the process. Yet, too often, the young people in our community encounter a very different process where the opposite happens. In the words of another young person:

¹³ This concept was proposed and developed Dan Siegel in *The Developing Mind*, 1999.

¹⁴ The UK charity PTSD UK has a useful explainer about "the window of tolerance" and how traumatic experiences can affect social functioning: <https://www.ptsduk.org/the-window-of-tolerance-and-ptsd/>

“On the first day they asked me questions for around 7 hours. I was totally fed up by the end; they honestly drove me crazy. Each question reminded me of my suffering, and every memory made my head hurt more. I felt like I was losing control from talking for so long about everything I have been through and the details of my trauma, my mind was under so much pressure, as it really doesn’t have the ability to think and talk for 7 hours. Eventually, I had to ask the assessors to stop the interview.”

These testimonies show that the personnel conducting age-assessment must be trained in trauma-informed processes before they can interact with vulnerable young people. The testimonies also show that the age assessments do not account for the possible re-traumatisation inherent in recounting abuse. This is compounded by the fact that safe and trusted adults are rarely allowed to accompany the young people in the assessment. When they are, they are often not well known to the young person. For one of our young community members, the “trusted adult” invited by Social Services to his age assessment session was different for every session.

3. Age disputes have long-term impacts on our young people’s asylum claims, social care, and access to education.

One of the key findings from our documentation of our young people’s experiences with age assessment is that, while the process lacks accuracy and is poorly implemented, the consequences on young people’s lives are far ranging. These include preventing access to asylum, social care and education.

On asylum claims, our data (box 3 below) shows the direct and significant impact age disputes have on the time it takes to be granted refugee protection.

The 27 age-disputed young people at the Baobab....

- **Have waited 50 months for a positive asylum decision. This is 8 more months – *almost a full school year*-- than our young people who have not been age-disputed**
- **Received a negative first decision for 68% of them – against 55% for young people not age-disputed.**

Box 3: the impact of age disputes on asylum decisions in our community

However the impacts of age disputes range far and wide beyond asylum claims. One young person at Baobab, for instance, saw his age-assessment have devastating effects on their process of family reunification. In this case, the age dispute was linked to a family reunification process which as an under-18 the young person would have had a chance of arguing successfully. The age dispute delayed that application, and when the young person was finally recognised as a minor, there was not enough time to apply for family reunification so the young person had to reapply as an adult. The family reunification process was thus delayed by at least 2 to 3 years.

Moreover, when young people are wrongly defined as adults, they lose their right to be placed in foster care. This means they lose their right to family life and to be looked after by caring adults. Instead, they are detained or accommodated with adults which poses significant safeguarding issues. Young people at Baobab have experienced being removed from care after short and superficial age assessments and denied access to rehabilitation which requires the presence of safe and supportive adults. Some young people at Baobab also saw their right to education being taken away after age assessments, even being removed from their school half-way through the year. In the words of a Baobab community member:

"They've stripped me of everything".

The impact on access to education cannot be underestimated. John, currently still age-disputed, still has no access to education appropriate for his age. In his words:

"Things are very difficult for me at the moment. I would like to talk to someone about how I am feeling and to be supported like a child of my true age. I want to go to school. I am so keen on learning English. I teach myself with YouTube videos, and there is an Iraqi man in the hotel who teaches me too sometimes. I think I'm doing well, but because of everything that I have experienced, my memory is not good".

Zayn had a birth record from Afghanistan (*Taskera*) which the Home Office refused to recognise. The whole process of getting his recorded date of birth accepted lasted a year. During that time, his education was put on hold, which delayed his education, his progress with the language, and has had a knock-on effect for his qualifications and job opportunities. For all our age-disputed young people, the age dispute means costly delays and instability at a crucial stage of their development.

4. Age disputes lead to significant safeguarding issues

All the young people we interviewed at Baobab experienced significant safeguarding issues as a consequence of their age being disputed.

Following an age-assessment where a young person is defined as an adult, the young person is removed from provisions of care and either detained or accommodated with adults. The young people are expected to share living spaces with much older adults and some run the risk of being re-traumatised after having already experienced abuse. Accounts of violence are present throughout the testimonies.

John said:

"I think I was detained for one day before I was transferred to a hostel, where I shared a room with 7 or 8 other people. It looked like a prison. One day, during Ramadan, some men with long hair asked why I wasn't fasting and why I was watching TV. I would have been exempt from fasting because I was unwell with TB, but I wasn't fasting as, in my faith, I don't think it is compulsory until you are 18 years old. The men punched me in the stomach and I couldn't sleep for the next two nights."

One of our young people was moved to an adult hostel where there were syringes on the floor and no cooking facilities. He expressed feeling abandoned and unsafe in the presence of adults under the influence of drugs and alcohol. He had to be monitored by the security guards as the unstable and unsafe environment led to feelings of suicidality.

Adil is an example of how disruptive age disputes can be, although in his case the dispute originated with social services. When the young person complained about his foster placement, he was age-disputed and assessed as an adult (he was 15 at the time). Assessed as an adult, he was placed in adult accommodation and moved 10 times in two years. In the words of his therapist, "it meant that Kent Social Services ended their support and [Adil] was put into accommodation with adults. He lost his accommodation near to familiar people, friends, college, and his football club. He felt disoriented, lost, and troubled." He self-harmed as a result.

These testimonies show age assessments have grave consequences, in a system where it should be the responsibility of the State to safeguard and look after vulnerable young people who are isolated from their parental figures.

5. Age disputes have devastating mental health consequences

The process of the Home Office or local authority age assessments and their outcomes have devastating mental health consequences for young people. As a joint report from Young Roots and the Helen Bamber Foundation published in May 2024 put it:

“Age disputes can activate high levels of stress, confusion, and uncertainty. (...) Worry and preoccupation about the outcomes of age disputes, as well as practical insecurity and withholding of much needed support, can interfere with their ability to meaningfully engage in psychological treatment and achieve their recovery aims. (...) The adversarial nature of age disputes can cause irreparable damage to the relationship of children with their social workers that can then reinforce difficulties with trust, attachment, and interpersonal relationships.”¹⁵

Fundamentally, our documentation shows that the outcome of the age assessment has widespread consequences for the young person’s sense of identity. Many young people expressed feeling treated like a criminal and accused of lying about fundamental facts. A Baobab clinician said “The age-assessments completely turn their world upside down. A world where truth is being said to not be the truth and where documentation is said to not be real”. Adil (see above) was self-harming. In the words of their therapist:

“The challenge to [Adil’s] date of birth had a profoundly negative effect on both his living situation and his mental health. The most disturbing element of this for [Adil] was that he has described how he likes to do things by the rules and likes to be honest. He could not fathom that he was disbelieved about his age, and this left him feeling undermined and has impacted on his self-confidence and trust in others since.”

¹⁵ Helen Bamber Foundation and Young Roots. “‘They Made Me Feel Like Myself’. A Joint Young Roots and Helen Bamber Foundation Report on Age Disputes and Supporting Young People’. May 2024. Available here: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f118f9dcfc9b3489f7bded0/t/6641bef61643144a745cf635/1715584760820/They+made+me+feel+like+myself_Report.pdf

Abbas who arrived via small boat age 15 was told he was 23. This led to his education in college being interrupted and the young person being moved to different accommodations outside of his social group. In terms of his mental health, his therapist described how he was angered at being disbelieved – notably as he knew the age his mother had told him he was, and he was hurt to hear repeatedly that his mother had been wrong.

For Peter the age dispute did not just delay family reunification by 2 to 3 years (see above). It also had long-lasting mental health consequences. In the words of his therapist:

“Being disbelieved, being held back, the idea that someone who doesn't know you says you are a fraud (you're not who you say you are), all this was crippling. The age dispute threw an element of doubt on everything else, questioning all credibility. He made a series of suicide attempts when thrown out of social care, and was constantly anxious, with crippling levels of anxiety.”

It is not just the practical implications (which stretch from preventing access to education and health to family reunifications) that make age disputes paralysing. Coming as they do at a critical stage of young people’s development (the end of teenage years and the onset of early adulthood), they throw disbelief on an aspect of young people’s sense of identity which is fundamental to them.

In the words of Janna Kreppner, Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Southampton, “age assessments are an attack on young people’s sense of identity”.¹⁶

¹⁶ Prof. Kreppner co-led with Dr. Ingi Iusmen research which has already produced important guidelines and recommendations to “trauma-inform” the asylum process, available in this report: *Trauma-Informing the Asylum Process* (Feb. 2024), available here: https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/487622/1/TIP_report_Final_print.pdf

Our Recommendations

We would like to offer the following 5 essential recommendations to guide urgent reform of age assessments, as based on our experience outlined above:

1. **End visual age-assessments** – no age assessment should include references to visual cues such as facial hair, skin tone or “lustre”, or eye contact, etc. Yet the vast majority of age-assessments are satisfied with such pseudo-evidence.
2. **Only people “significantly over-25” should be age-assessed.** Anyone not “significantly over-25” should be taken into proper care. This is particularly true at all intake units, where young people arrive after difficult journey: there should be no age-assessment conducted immediately upon arrival.
3. **All age assessments should be multidisciplinary.** No border force personnel or social worker can be trained enough to master the complexities of understanding aging with different cultural contexts in mind or with considerations of how trauma impacts presentation, demeanour, or how young people talk.
4. **“Benefit of the doubt” must apply and young people age-disputed must be treated as children first.** All our age-disputed young people were treated as adults while age-disputed.
5. **Put all children in the care of the Department of Education and of Social Care,** whether they have British citizenship or not. Simply put, children and young people under 25 must be removed from the care and remit of the Home Office.