

SAFEGUARDING QUARTERLY UPDATE (2)

This update provides a summary of various 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 policies, or specific initiatives undertaken by our operational directorates - Border Force, Her Majesty's Passport Office, Immigration Enforcement, and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

In collaboration with respective policy and operational leads, this update has been produced by Safeguarding Advice and Children's Champion (SACC) - a Home Office team, led by 2 professional social work advisers, responsible for ensuring the department meets its statutory child safeguarding duty under [section 55](#) of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act. SACC also oversees the Home Office relationship with local safeguarding partnerships on matters relating to migration, borders, and citizenship.

Independent Child Trafficking Guardians

[Independent Child Trafficking Guardians](#) (ICTGs) provide specialist independent support for trafficked children, regardless of nationality or immigration status, and advocate on their behalf to ensure that their best interests are reflected in decisions made by public authorities.

In May 2021, the Home Office expanded ICTGs to 11 additional areas, seeing the Service extended to cover, in total, two thirds of all local authorities across England and Wales. The ICTG service, delivered by Barnardo's, was rolled out in the following additional areas: London (except for the Borough of Croydon where the service was already available); Essex; West Yorkshire; Merseyside; Kent; Surrey; Warwickshire; Bedfordshire; North Yorkshire; Gloucestershire and Bristol; and Lancashire. The service continues to operate in the areas where it was already available: Hampshire; Greater Manchester; West Midlands Combined Authorities; East Midlands; the London Borough of Croydon and nationally in Wales.

If you have any questions or are interested to know more about this phase of the roll out, please email Ana.Carvallo-Phillips@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Border Force work on Project AIDANT

Project AIDANT is a series of multi-agency operational intensifications, led by the National Crime Agency, to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking.

During June and July 2021, Border Force Safeguarding and Modern Slavery (SAMS) teams around the UK supported the Project AIDANT intensification which focused on child trafficking and criminal exploitation. The intention of the activity was to enhance and develop knowledge in relation to child trafficking and exploitation of those aged under 18.

As part of the intensification, the national SAMS team organised the delivery of a webinar from the Modern Slavery Unit (supported by Barnardo's) on the role of the ICTGs when child potential victims of modern slavery are encountered. This was attended by around 50 Border Force officers and wider Home office teams. Anyone who would like to view the webinar, can obtain a copy of the recording by contacting: BorderForceNationalSafeguardingandModernSlavery@homeoffice.gov.uk.

During this AIDANT intensification, Border Force responded to an arrival at London Stansted Airport which involved the trafficking of a very young child. The child arrived with their mother, who attempted to gain entry using forged documents and then sought asylum. During her asylum screening interview, the mother stated that she was in debt bondage which she was expected to pay back working in a hotel. Border Force officers identified potential indicators of child trafficking, however, when a search of the mother's phone revealed naked photos of the child which had been sent to someone via WhatsApp, along with a video of them naked from the waist down. The child also had unexplained bruising to their body. Police issued a PPO, with the child placed into protective care and referred to the National Referral Mechanism. The child has since received a positive reasonable grounds decision and remains in the care of the local authority.

Border Force training on modern slavery

July saw the launch of a new Border Force e-learning module for overseas law enforcement and other stakeholders which is available on the [modern slavery training resource page](#) at GOV.UK. The e-learning is aimed specifically at overseas law enforcement / government officials, NGOs, and airlines and the transportation sector. It is published in English, Thai, Vietnamese, Albanian, Turkish and Azerbaijani. The course takes 45 minutes and topics include international definitions of modern slavery and human trafficking, indicators, and generic referral processes.

Operation Innerste

Operation Innerste is a multi-agency safeguarding process that supports unaccompanied migrant children, ensuring consistency and improving rapport building with these vulnerable children to prevent them being re-trafficked or from going missing.

As part of the process, the first responder (usually the police) completes an initial welfare form, obtains fingerprints and photographs, using both immigration and Common Law powers which are passed on to Immigration Enforcement's Vulnerability team 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, are trafficked, found in distressing circumstances or commit crime. SACC's social work leads also support the Home Office in the Operation Innerste process by attending section 47 strategy meetings convened by local authorities.

Operation Innerste is now live in 29 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales and is averaging 50 referrals a month. A key metric of the operation is the child remaining in their care placement at the 72-hour point; in the period 1 April to 31 July 2021, of the cases we were able to confirm, 98% of the children remained in placement.

Key to the success of the operation is partnership working between all agencies to ensure local processes are agreed. If you would like to find out who your local force lead is or for more information, please contact modernslavery@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk.

Rough sleeping and homelessness

You will be aware that this government is committed to ending rough sleeping by the end of this parliament and the Home Office has a positive and important role in supporting the wellbeing of rough sleepers, getting them off the street.

As part of the Home Office response to this commitment we have been engaging with local authorities to support them regarding rough sleeping and homelessness.

With regards to non-UK nationals that are experiencing rough sleeping, we have been working with the Local Government Association (LGA) to discuss these issues with Local Authority Chief Executives in England. The overriding purpose of this engagement is to transform the relationship between local and central government on matters regarding non-UK national rough sleepers, recognising each other as partners in achieving a reduction numbers of these people on the streets. This partnership will work collaboratively to address homelessness and rough sleeping, improving outcomes for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping, and the communities in which they reside.

We recognise the important role adult safeguarding boards can play in this issue and in September we held a session with the chairs of these boards to talk to them about our work and how we may be able to support their efforts. We recognise that rough sleepers are some of the most vulnerable in society and our efforts are focused on securing pathways off the streets for non-UK nationals through the regularisation of stay or supported return.

If you would like to hear more about our work we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you. Please contact our Home Office Homelessness Team at HOHomelessnessteam@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Home Office Young People's Board

In response to the independent [Windrush Lessons Learned Review](#), SACC is working with leads from across the department to implement its safeguarding related recommendations.

This includes running the Young People's Board, a new participation group 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. First held in May, there have been 4 Young People's Board meetings in England to date.

Contacting SACC

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