

# Evidence to Parliamentary inquiry on asylum support impact on children

**1. HOSTEL LIVING CONDITIONS.** Hostel conditions for women with children have small bedsit rooms, no space to play on the floor of the room or on the level that the room is on. There is no space for anything but a few very small toys in the bedsit they live in. Food preparation is difficult in communal kitchens with little equipment. Generally conditions are not good. The Compass Contract is unspecific on many of the issues pertinent to these points, and monitoring by UKBA and the contractor is done against the contract specification. The Contract does need to be tightened to be more specific. Ideally there should not be such hostels.

**2. TRANSITION TO SETTLED STATUS.**

- a. There is lack of liaison between UKBA and Local Authority housing departments when settled status is granted leading to very unsatisfactory homeless accommodation for children in an attempt to at least provide a roof over their heads.
- b. Long delays in getting Child Benefit when settled status granted. This in turn leads to long delays in getting Child tax Credit ( I've seen cases of 6 months, and you cannot get Child Tax Credit till Child Benefit awarded. They get it backdated but it is a long time to be without this amount of money meant to support children.)

**3. INTERPRETING SERVICE**

From an interpreting service. Our accredited training programme does include detailed training on Interpreting for Children and vulnerable adults. We have experience, first hand of the difficulties faced by minors seeking asylum in the UK. Children face a very difficult time and are not often afforded the same courtesy that a convicted criminal would when being questioned by home office official. Due to their horrific experiences, their age and fear they often lie, get things mixed up or unintentionally say things that would prejudice their application which is why the refusal rate is so high.

The home office themselves are always very reluctant to spend money on either utilising Interpreters or translating material. They sometimes use Interpreters from the National Register who are fully qualified but more often than not use unqualified and unregulated bi lingual staff.

**4. COUNSELLING SERVICES.** Are there enough provisions for counselling/therapeutic work with traumatised children? Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services provision is usually overstretched.

**5. EDUCATION ISSUES.**

- a. Traumatic experiences for children when they have to move schools when they get moved by housing provider. Transport provision by the local authority is not always possible for children to remain at their school if near the end of a term, or if the family get settled status and then go to temporary accommodation before they move into new permanent accommodation. They need the stability of their school when so much else around them is changing.
- b. Children of asylum seekers do not have money for school trips and the other items that their school peers will have.

