Call for evidence

Inquiry into asylum support for children and young people

Background
The Inquiry into Asylum Support for Children and Young People is an independent panel of MPs and peers examining whether the current asylum support system meets the needs of children and young people.

The Inquiry, chaired by Sarah Teather MP, will examine a range of issues, including

1. Income poverty and its effects on children’s development, well-being and life chances
2. Living on asylum support: how this affects children and families
3. Special needs, disability, early years, health and education
4. The asylum support process itself: delays, dispersal and the Azure payment card.

We are hoping to hear from a range of organisations and individuals working with children and families in the asylum system, as well as from young people and families themselves. The Inquiry will report its findings and recommendations in early 2013.

Call for evidence
The Inquiry into Asylum Support for Children and Young People will consider written evidence and oversee the oral evidence sessions. Written and oral evidence will inform the final report. The final report and its recommendations will be submitted to the ministers responsible for immigration and child poverty, for their consideration and response.

For young people and families
The panel would like to hear from young people and families who have direct experience of living on asylum support.

1. How do you feel about your life in the UK? How do you feel about the support you get from the Home Office?
2. Do you get cash support from the Home Office or the Azure payment card?
3. How long have you lived on this support? How easy was it to access it?
4. Have you had any period without any financial support?
5. How do you feel about the amount of support you receive from the Home Office? Please tell us if you can buy enough healthy food, clothes and toiletries
for you and your children. Please tell us if there are ever things you can’t buy that you need.

6. Is the support from the Home Office enough for you to eat? How many times per day do you eat? Do you or your children ever go hungry?

7. Where do you live? Have you lived in more than one place? If so, how did it feel to be moved?

8. Is it clean, warm and safe for you and your children?

9. Do you think your children have the things they want and need or are there items that you are unable to buy for them?

10. **For families with small children** - Are there any extra difficulties you find providing for your family if you have small children? E.g. buying prams, baby formula, nappies and bottles.

11. **For single parents** – Are there any difficulties providing for your children being a single parent, e.g. when going to report, taking children to school?

12. Do you feel the support helps your children do well in education? Does it allow you to buy the things you need for your children’s education? E.g. books, stationary, uniforms, school lunch, school trips etc.

13. Are your children able to save any money each week or month in a bank or at home?

14. Can you and your children go out and play, have a social life, see friends and family, integrate into the community?

15. Can you do cultural activities like visit museums, the cinema or concerts?

16. Can you go to the mosque, church, temple etc?

17. Do you or your children have any disabilities? Does your current situation impact on your ability to cope with these disabilities? Are there any things you need that you can’t afford to buy?

18. Has your physical or mental health got worse since you came to the UK? If so, why do you think this is?

19. **For families using the Azure card** What do you think about the Azure card? How does using the Azure card make you feel? Have you or your children experienced any problems because of the Azure card? Are there any things you or your children need that you can’t buy because you have an Azure card instead of cash?

20. Do you receive any money or help from anywhere else to help you E.g. borrow from friends, your church, mosque, a charity?

21. Is there anything else that you would like to tell the panel?

For organisations and practitioners
Please provide evidence on the following topics from the perspective of your organisation. Or if you are an individual please provide details of the type of professional you are. In addition, the panel would welcome details of any relevant research or information from your organisation that you would be willing to share with the Inquiry.

1. Is there any evidence of the effects of income poverty on children’s development, well-being and their life chances? If so, what are the effects?
2. The government’s stated objective for the asylum support system is that it provides for the ‘essential living needs’ of those who would otherwise be destitute. In your view is this currently the case and please explain your reasoning with references to any evidence or examples.

3. Are the current levels of support provided to asylum seeking children and families adequate in meeting the needs of children and young people? Please explain your reasoning.

4. Is the accommodation provided to asylum-seeking families effective in keeping children safe and promoting their welfare?

5. Does the current asylum support system enable children in asylum-seeking families to have a standard of living adequate for a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development? Please explain your reasoning.

6. Does the current system have any impact on children’s long term outcomes and opportunities in the future?

7. How does the current support system affect families where there is a child or parent with a disability?

8. Are there any other circumstances where children may be particularly adversely affected by the levels of asylum support?

9. What is the impact on children and parents of the fact that parents are not allowed to work?

10. Are there any concerns about the current administration of the asylum support system with relation to children?

11. How often do you see families with no financial support whatsoever?

12. Are there any concerns about the use of the Azure payment card in relation to children?

13. Do you think there are any adverse effects of increasing asylum support levels for children and families? Would greater levels of support attract greater numbers of asylum seekers or migrants?

**Oral evidence**
The panel is planning to hold oral sessions on **20 and 27 November 2012** at the House of Commons. Please contact Nadine Ibbetson on 020 7841 4400 (ext 3016) or Nadine.Ibbetson@childrenssociety.org.uk as soon as possible if you know anybody who would like to give oral evidence to the inquiry.

**Written evidence**
The deadline for submitting evidence is **7 December 2012**. You can email your evidence to Nadine.Ibbetson@childrenssociety.org.uk or send a hard copy of your evidence to:

Nadine Ibbetson,
Policy Team,
The Children’s Society
Edward Rudolf House
Margery Street
WC1X 0JL