

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING UPDATE (9)

This update provides a summary of various child safeguarding activity recently or currently undertaken across the Home Office that relates to migration and borders.

This may include, for example, information on new legislation, strategies and polices, or specific initiatives undertaken by our operational directorates - Border Force, Customer Services Group, and Immigration Enforcement.

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 and borders.

### Notifying the Home Office about a child safeguarding practice review

The UK wide nature in which the Home Office operates means a rapid or child safeguarding practice review could relate to interactions with a child by any 1 or more of our operational directorates. In light of this, the Home Office has established a central departmental contact point for all new and existing reviews. Please notify the Chief Caseworker Unit at [CCUsafeguarding@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:CCUsafeguarding@homeoffice.gov.uk) of any review you believe requires a migration or borders related contribution from the Home Office. This will help to ensure the review is promptly directed to the appropriate business areas.

### Operation KARETU

Operation KARETU is a multi-agency outbound operation delivered at airports across the UK which is led by Border Force in collaboration with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. In 2025, the operation continued to help safeguard young people travelling to the Balearic Islands, Greece, Cyprus, and other holiday destinations from the risk of exploitation and provide them with helpline numbers if they experience difficulties.

### Project Vigilant

The Home Office continues to work with Thames Valley Police on Project Vigilant. This is a police-led crime prevention strategy to protect the public by targeting predatory behaviour before offending occurs. The Home Office is also using the initiative to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those living and working within the Asylum Accommodation Estate.

This essential partnership work with police colleagues helps develop quicker, more effective, formalised information sharing processes. This strengthens the joint management of people known to the Home Office who are coming to police attention in public spaces behaving in a predatory manner with intent to cause sexual harm.

## Recruiting for the Home Office Young People's Board

With thanks to those who have previously helped identify participants, SACC would appreciate your continued help to promote recruitment for the Home Office Young People's Board (YPB).

Established in 2021 following the independent Windrush Lessons Learned Review, the YPB is a UK-wide participation group for young people, aged 13-22, who meet every 2 months to discuss and give their views on priority Home Office related issues.

Over the past 4 years, the YPB has contributed to Home Office understanding of children and young people's views on a range of issues, influencing the development of policies, practices, and operational tools across the department. We'd be grateful if you could please publicise this opportunity to any members of young person participation or advocacy groups operating in your local area, especially young people with experience of the Home Office (be this direct or through family). Young people in your area can express their interest by emailing the following details to [YPB@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:YPB@homeoffice.gov.uk):

- Their full name, age, gender, and nationality.
- A summary of why they are interested in joining the YPB.
- Details of an email address at which we can directly contact them.

## Operation Innerste

Launched in 2016, Operation Innerste is a multi-agency safeguarding initiative addressing the complex issues around missing unaccompanied migrant children. The operation continues to operate successfully, standardising processes, in 39 police forces across England and Wales, safeguarding over 2,000 unaccompanied children in the last 5 years.

The process begins with the first responder, typically police, engaging the child in conversation to build trust and provide a safe space for them to share concerns. This early rapport helps reduce the risk of trafficking and encourages children to remain engaged with support services.

As part of the protocol, responders complete a welfare and safeguarding form and collect fingerprints and photographs under immigration and common law powers. These are sent to Immigration Enforcement's National Safeguarding Hub for secure storage. This biometric data is vital for identifying children if they go missing, are trafficked, or found in vulnerable situations.

## Contacting SACC

Please contact Mark Walsh ([Mark.Walsh@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Walsh@homeoffice.gov.uk)) and Christine Smart ([Christine.Smart@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:Christine.Smart@homeoffice.gov.uk)) if you would like to learn more about the information included in this update.