



House of Commons  
Home Affairs Committee

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**Unaccompanied child  
migrants: Government  
Response to the  
Committee's Thirteenth  
Report of Session  
2016–17**

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**Third Special Report of Session  
2017–19**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 19 December 2017*

## Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

### Current membership

[Yvette Cooper MP](#) (*Labour, Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford*) (Chair)

[Rehman Chishti MP](#) (*Conservatives, Gillingham and Rainham*)

[Mr Christopher Chope MP](#) (*Conservatives, Christchurch*)

[Stephen Doughty MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Cardiff South and Penarth*)

[Preet Kaur Gill MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Birmingham, Edgbaston*)

[Sarah Jones MP](#) (*Labour, Croydon Central*)

[Tim Loughton MP](#) (*Conservative, East Worthing and Shoreham*)

[Stuart C. McDonald MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East*)

[Will Quince MP](#) (*Conservative, Colchester*)

[Douglas Ross MP](#) (*Conservative, Moray*)

[Naz Shah MP](#) (*Labour, Bradford West*)

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom](http://www.parliament.uk/homeaffairscom) and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Carol Oxborough (Clerk), Phil Jones (Second Clerk), Harriet Deane and Simon Armitage (Committee Specialists), David Gardner (Senior Committee Assistant), Mandy Sullivan (Committee Assistant) and George Perry (Senior Media and Communications Officer).

### Contacts

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## Third Special Report

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The Home Affairs Committee published its Thirteenth Report of Session 2016–17, [Unaccompanied child migrants](#) (HC 1026), on 6 March 2017. The Government's response was received on 11 December 2017 and is appended to this report.

In the Government response the Committee's recommendations are shown in **bold** type; the Government's response is shown in plain type.

## Appendix: Government Response

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The Home Office notes the Committee's interim report on Unaccompanied Child Migrants published on 6 March 2017. We look forward to continuing to assist with the Committee's inquiry into this issue. The Government's response is below.

**We recommend that, before implementing any changes to the Dubs scheme, the Government respond urgently to the statement published by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner on 22 February, and consult him on his assessment of the likely impact of any such changes on the scale of trafficking of unaccompanied children.**

**We further recommend that, before implementing any changes to the Dubs scheme, the Government publish up-to-date information on the offers made by local authorities to take unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016; and that it clarify their capacity to take further unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under this provision in the 2017–18 financial year. This process should take account of the variations in total costs of accepting asylum-seeking children in different parts of the country.**

We note the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's statement of 22 February on protecting unaccompanied child refugees against modern slavery and other forms of exploitation. We welcome the focus on the UK's wider support for vulnerable refugee children and efforts to prevent human trafficking at source. The Home Office maintains a regular dialogue with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and these issues were discussed in a meeting between the Commissioner and the previous Immigration Minister in April.

On 10 March the Government published a policy statement setting out the basis on which future transfers under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 will take place. To be eligible, children must have been present in Europe before 20 March 2016 and it be determined, following individual assessment, that it would be in the child's best interests to come to the UK. Member States have been asked to prioritise children who are likely to qualify for refugee status in the UK and the most vulnerable, according to UNHCR's "Children at risk" individual risk factors, which includes those at risk of trafficking or other forms of exploitation. These criteria were shared with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner prior to publication.

Over 200 children have already arrived in the UK under section 67. The Home Secretary has written to her counterparts in France, Greece and Italy to invite referrals of eligible children according to the criteria in the policy statement. We continue to work with the

authorities of those Member States as well as partners such as UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and NGOs to agree the processes for transferring further children. These processes must be implemented in line with each individual Member State's national laws.

In February the Government announced that the total specified number of children to be transferred under section 67 would be 350, which was subsequently increased in April to 480. We have always been clear that, as is required by the legislation, the specified number would be decided after consulting with local authorities. On 2 November the High Court confirmed that the Government's approach to implementing section 67 was lawful. The Home Office consulted extensively with local authorities over several months to reach the number of children to be taken under section 67. This included a national launch event and over 10 regional events in England, as well as Scotland and Wales, and a number of letters from the Immigration Minister to all local authorities. Any further places offered by local authorities will be gratefully received, and we will use them to fulfil our existing commitments, including ensuring a fairer distribution of the over 4,000 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) already in local authority care in the UK.

The Government would like to correct the report's suggestion that there is existing capacity for a further 4,000 unaccompanied children. In formulating this figure, the Committee mistakenly appears to have taken numbers attached to the National Transfer Scheme's (NTS) 0.07% threshold and applied them nationally. This is based on a misunderstanding of the 0.07% threshold. The 0.07% threshold is not a target. Under the terms of the NTS no local authority or region is expected to look after more unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children than 0.07% of the total child population in their area. Once a local authority reaches this point we would expect them to transfer the child to another local authority through the NTS. The methodology used to come to a figure of 4,000 is flawed because it assumes that all local authorities would be able to absorb large numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children with very specific and diverse needs in a short period of time. The NTS was designed to avoid a repeat of the pressures faced by Kent in 2015 when they received a large number of unaccompanied children in a short space of time. Applying the suggested approach would create similar pressures in local authorities across the UK and would leave local authorities with very limited ability to look after spontaneous arrivals. It also fails to recognise that certain regions have significant ongoing commitments to other asylum and resettlement schemes which also have an impact on local services.

The Government already publishes a significant amount of information about asylum claims from unaccompanied children and we are considering what further information we can publish in future to provide greater transparency about the number of UASC in each part of the UK. The Written Ministerial Statement of 1 November 2016 by Edward Timpson MP, then Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families, and Robert Goodwill MP, then Minister for Immigration, commits the Government to publish regular updates on the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children transferred to the UK as part of the upcoming unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children safeguarding strategy.

Through the ongoing operation of the NTS the Home Office continues to work closely with local authorities in order to identify placements for unaccompanied children. Any

further places offered by local authorities will be used to work towards a more equitable distribution of unaccompanied children, including transfer of the several hundred children who remain in local authorities above their 0.07%.

Local authorities will continue to receive the national funding rates for every unaccompanied child they look after in their area. These rates were significantly increased in July 2016 by 28% for 16 and 17 year olds and 20% for under 16s. The Government is reviewing the funding it provides to local authorities looking after UASC, and as part of that review will consider information provided by local authorities from across the UK.