

Job description

JOB TITLE:	Age Disputes Casework Adviser
TEAM:	Youth Services
GROUP:	Services
LOCATION:	London
REPORTS TO:	Youth Services Manager
GRADE:	5
SALARY:	
HOURS:	35

The Organisation

Founded in 1951, the Refugee Council exists to support people who come to the UK in need of safety and speak out for compassion, fairness and kindness. We achieve this by providing expert advice and casework, building the capacity of refugee community organisations, and working with allies across society to change government policy.

Our vision for refugees to be welcome to live safe and fulfilling lives contributing to the UK has never been more urgent and needed. Today 27 million refugees and 84 million displaced people around the world need of safety, dignity and welcome. We are determined to secure public and government support for safe routes for all people seeking safety, and a fair, effective and compassionate refugee protection system.

Now is an excellent time to join the Refugee Council. Our [strategy](#) sets an ambitious direction which will see us defend refugee protection in the UK against the Government's corrosive plans with refugees and like-minded allies, united in our desire to create a just, fair and humane refugee protection system. It will also see us delivering direct services that improve people's refugee protection journey through targeted advice and casework, and strengthening and connecting Refugee Community Organisations with other service providers and advocates.

Our Values

Our values underpin everything we do:

- **Inclusive:** We are inclusive. We work with - not for - refugees and people seeking asylum, so they have an equal voice, co-producing projects and ensuring their expertise and experiences are at the heart of what we do.
- **Collaborative:** We are collaborative. Working with others is a priority in order to have the collective impact that is vital to achieve policy and practice reform.
- **Courageous:** We speak out when we see injustice, cruelty and unfairness. We always stand up for what we believe is the right thing to do to transform the experiences of those seeking protection in our country.

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- **Respectful:** We are respectful of all those we interact with. We treat everyone – our staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, partners and people we disagree with – with the same respect, professionalism and understanding.

The Refugee Council is one of the leading organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. Our operational teams based in various locations in England provide advice and assistance across a wide range of issues, including helping asylum seekers through the complexities of the asylum system, addressing issues of destitution and assisting refugees and asylum seekers to access key services including housing, welfare benefits, health, education and employment. Our teams work with relevant agencies including the Home Office, Refugee Community Organisations, Local Authorities, Legal Service Providers, Housing Providers, Health Institutions, Job Centre Plus and other mainstream service providers.

Context and Purpose of the Job

The Refugee Council's services strategy is aimed at delivering high impact, sustainable services that are centred on the needs of people seeking asylum and refugees in the UK, and improving the system of support that they rely on for their safety and future lives in local communities. We seek to significantly improve early access to information, advice and support for people seeking asylum and refugees in crisis and those seeking to integrate into the UK.

In December 2023, with consultancy support, we designed an exciting youth service strategy with a delivery model centred around children's needs and with the vision for change on how separated children and young people are treated in their asylum journey by creating holistic casework, high quality joined up relationships across the organisation, collaboration with local partners and supporters through learning and sharing best practice to transform their experience and bring systemic change.

The Age Dispute work sits within the Youth Casework team, and we seek to deepen the impact by supporting more children and young people now dispersed across England and who are wrongly age assessed or assumed as over 18 by the Home Office and/or by the local authorities. The age disputes casework adviser will bring expertise to provide specialist casework to challenge incorrect age assessments, use experience to deal and prioritise high risk cases, work with various stakeholders including legal representatives, statutory agencies, and collaborate with others in sector to develop, learn and share best practice resources in casework provision. The postholder will maintain an understanding of the changing practice in relation to age assessments in particular and the wider policy landscape, work with colleagues in the Youth Services and in consultation with the Youth Services Manager, liaise with other relevant Refugee Council teams, including advocacy, practice development, youth involvement, In-Form to use casework evidence to address inequities in policy and practice.

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Page 2 of 7



Based within the Youth Services of the Refugee Council, the Age Disputes Casework Adviser will be responsible for:

- Working with children and young people to understand their experiences and needs.
- Working closely with other Age Disputes Casework Advisers and the Youth Services Manager to identify and review high risk and complex cases that need prioritising and create effective internal case triage and allocation systems.
- Liaising with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the needs of young people with disputed age are recognised and met.
- Identifying age assessment policy and practice issues impacting on the lives of separated children for possible action via strategic litigation with legal representatives and advocacy colleagues.
- Maintaining expert casework knowledge and understanding of the environment and barriers that separated children seeking asylum face in with regards to the assessment of their age, and issues related to access to high quality information, advice and legal representation on immigration, asylum and welfare, and always learning and sharing the knowledge with others.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

Working with young people.

1. Work in the best interests of all separated young people who are wrongly age assessed and referred unto our service.
2. Manage a high volume of referrals from internal colleagues and professionals effectively, and work with Youth Services Manager to identify high risk cases, decide eligibility and priority criteria, and providing timely, helpful, and legally accurate responses at all times.
3. Manage their own complex caseload, primarily age dispute related (appropriate assessments, litigation, and appeals) and support on a range of welfare matters including health, education, and community care issues.
4. Provide high quality advice to separated young people with incorrect age assessments, ensure that they receive accurate information, advice and legal representation on immigration, asylum, and other relevant welfare issues. This will at times include young people in detention centres, temporary and/or home office provided accommodations in London.
5. Undertake complex casework with young people whose age has been disputed, supporting them through complex legal proceedings, via advice, emotional support and acting as litigation friend, including writing high quality detailed witness statements, attending court hearings, and ensuring that their best interests are represented.
6. Work closely with the Youth Services Manager to identify age assessment policy and practice issues impacting on the lives of separated children for possible action via strategic litigation with legal representatives and advocacy colleagues.
7. Support young people using a mix of office appointments, visits, one-to-one advice, and group briefings as appropriate, and remote advice where preferred or feasible, which will range from one-off pieces of advice to more intensive follow up casework with young people.
8. Identify, address, and manage challenging behaviour by vulnerable young people in a sensitive and effective manner, by liaising with relevant external agencies such as local authority children's services.
9. Work effectively and professionally with interpreters, and maintain professional boundaries, impartiality, and confidentiality at all times.
10. Maintain high quality, current client records in accordance with the agreed format and organisational policies, funder requirements, and relevant legislation, and work with other colleagues to ensure that date is kept appropriately in the database (In-Form).

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Page 3 of 7



11. Undertake discrete pieces of work such as putting together case studies, assisting in collating information on the project, as required from time to time.
12. Identify, encourage, and support young people to have a voice through participation in storytelling, co-designing, co-planning and co-delivering activities with colleagues in policy and advocacy, external affairs and refugee involvement teams.
13. Work effectively with a range of statutory and non-statutory bodies such as local authority children's services, public law solicitors, health and education professionals, and voluntary sector agencies, always in the best interests of young people.
14. Undertake risk assessments as required within the Health and Safety Policy of the Refugee Council.
15. Communicate any safeguarding or health and safety matters to the appropriate Refugee Council staff and partner organisations.
16. Maintain current knowledge of relevant legislations and good practice sufficient as a minimum to maintain OISC accreditation.

Service development.

1. Work with internal colleagues, including advocacy, practice development and youth services manager to improve policy and practice by recording all relevant data timely and accurately and by sharing evidence of malpractices.
2. Provide the outcome data including quarterly, annual, and ad hoc statistics, reports and case studies needed to meet the Refugee Council and funder requirements.
3. In consultation with Youth Services Manager, assist in the creation of staff training material, operational guides and external training delivery and/or collation of information on the age disputes work for both internal and external use.
4. Embed the youth involvement approaches in your work to develop and support young people to be as independent and self-directed as possible and encourage participation and involvement when appropriate.
5. Maintain your own personal and professional development (including undertaking relevant training), with the support and agreement of your line manager, to meet the shifting demands of the role.
6. Communicate the Refugee Council's age disputes work to internal and external stakeholders to learn, share, and strengthen practice knowledge and relationships with peers.
7. Ensure that resources are used effectively in meeting young people's needs either individually or collectively.
8. Carry out all work with regard to the Refugee Council's organisational policies and procedures.

For the organisation.

1. In consultation with the Youth Services Manager, you can represent the Refugee Council externally and you should act professionally and promote effective multiagency partnership and stakeholder working.
2. Participate in meetings, learning and development activities as necessary.
3. Commit to the organisation's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy.
4. Undertake any reasonable duties as directed by your line manager.

Additional Information

Health & Safety

The post holder is responsible for:

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No: N200100132

Page 4 of 7



Cooperating with the Refugee Council in delivering all legal responsibilities in respect of your own and your colleagues, volunteers, clients and others health and safety whilst at work.

Becoming familiar with the Refugee Council's Health & Safety Policy and procedures including evacuation procedures at your workplace.

Carrying out risk assessments of your own work and especially of your own workstation to ensure that you do not expose yourself or others to unnecessary risk.

Flexibility

In order to deliver services effectively, a degree of flexibility is needed, and the post-holder may be required to perform work not specifically referred to above. Such duties will, however, fall within the scope of the job, at the appropriate grade. The job description will be subject to periodic review with the post-holder to ensure it accurately reflects the duties of the job.

Equal Opportunities Statement

As part of its recruitment policy, the Refugee Council intends to ensure that no prospective or actual employee is discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, nationality, marital status, sexual orientation, employment status, class, disability, age, religious belief or political persuasion, or is disadvantaged by any condition or requirement which is not demonstrably justifiable.

Working at the Refugee Council

A commitment to the work of the Refugee Council.

Personal Effectiveness

With the support of their manager the post-holder will need to effectively manage their own workload and medium and long term plans and objectives.

Flexible working

This job allows hybrid working but depending on the work demands, prior agreement and authorisation from line management, you may work on certain days from home.

The post of Age Disputes Casework Adviser is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Therefore, all convictions, cautions and bind-overs, including those regarded as 'spent', must be declared at the application stage. An offer of employment is subject to a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service check. Repeat DBS checks are initiated every two years.

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Page 5 of 7



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Qualifications

Essential

1. Office of Immigration Services Commission (OISC) accreditation Level 1 or the ability to attain accreditation within probation period. The post-holder must at all times adhere to the required standards as laid down by the OISC.

Experience

Essential

1. Experience of working with separated children and young people seeking asylum and providing advice in relation to the immigration and welfare issues they face.
2. Extensive experience of dealing with complex cases, including advising and supporting vulnerable young people who may exhibit distressed behaviour, with a range of intersectional needs, and in high pressured environment.
3. Experience of multitasking, undertaking triage assessments (assessing young people's needs by phone or face to face), and prioritising cases effectively whilst retaining excellent casework support and attention to detail.
4. Experience of responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns and incidents.
5. Experience of liaising and negotiating effectively with external agencies, including statutory services, and ensuring clients receive access to all services to which they are entitled.
6. Proven ability to work effectively in a multi-disciplinary team or with multi-agency forums to ensure children and young people are safe and are receiving support appropriate to their needs.
7. Experience of presenting complex information to various audiences, delivering workshops/training and using data to share the story of separated children experiences to influence practitioners, donors and members of the public.
8. Experience of providing advice to young people whose age has been wrongly assessed and subsequently treated as adults.

Knowledge, skills and abilities

Essential

1. Clear understanding of child protection and safeguarding best practice.
2. Good understanding of equal opportunities legislation and good practice and in particular how it relates to working with refugee children who are age disputed.
3. Sufficient understanding and knowledge of UK current asylum and welfare legislation affecting separated children, for example Children Act (1989), Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Sexual Offences Act (2003), Children and Social Work Act 2017.
4. Good written and spoken English of a standard sufficient to produce concise written records for external bodies such as for a court hearing.
5. Good negotiation and advocacy skills with the ability to represent a child professionally.
6. The ability to work effectively with interpreters, and with a range of internal and external stakeholders.

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7. Able to work to best practice standards in terms of professional boundaries and impartiality, and proven understanding of and adherence to confidentiality policy and procedures, recognising why the implementation of confidentiality procedures is imperative to working with children and young people.
8. Flexibility to respond to urgent needs of young people, cover for absent colleagues, sometimes at short notice, able to travel and work in other parts of the UK as required, and outside hours if necessary.
9. Able to work with others, independently, manage own workload, deliver on goals and tasks set to the high standards.
10. Good IT skills to undertake updating of databases and knowledge of spread sheet and word processing systems.
11. Commitment to the Refugee Council's values, and the principles of confidentiality, impartiality, non-directive advice and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

Desirable

1. Ability to speak and/or write in one or more languages commonly used by children seeking asylum in the UK.

People with lived experience as a refugee are encouraged to apply.

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Page 7 of 7

